

The Armenian Merchants of New Julfa: Some Aspects of their International
Trade in the Late Seventeenth Century

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ABSTRACT

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This study attempts to determine the role and economic position of the Armenian merchants of New Julfa between the dates of 1664 and 1720. As a preliminary some details are brought to light in order to correct misconceptions surrounding their settlement and situation in the Safavid capital from the sixteenth century on. Armenian sources are used to determine the structure of merchant organization in New Julfa, as well as the mode of civil government that ruled the Armenian suburb of Isphahan. The trade routes, the modes of payments, the goods specific to their international trade are examined. A global analysis of their participation in the international trade at the end of the seventeenth century is attempted by consulting Armenian and European sources. Their level of participation in the East India Companies of England, Holland, and France is determined based on European archives and travel accounts. One of the main contributions here is a seventeenth-century merchant biography. The account of the life of an Armenian merchant from New Julfa in the service of the French on the Indian subcontinent illustrates within the narration itself many of the conclusions reached here from other sources. It is to our knowledge the only example of a merchant biography which offers the possibility to fathom the social life of a merchant of his group. His story has been pieced together by consulting the French archives. Most other details of merchant life found in the next pages are from Armenian account books or European travel accounts.

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Translations and Transliterations

In order not to needlessly tire the reader care has been taken to use the familiar form of certain names constantly used throughout the text. New Julfa was preferred over the transliterated Armenian form of Nor Julfa. There were three choices for Isfahan, the correctly transliterated Iṣfahān, and Isphahan. The travellers tipped the scale in favor of Isphahan still commonly used on maps printed in Iran. Khoja which must appear near a hundred times in the text was given preference over khwāja. The names of the Persian kings have not been transliterated. For the Armenian words in the text the Hübschman-Meillet Benveniste system has been used, and not the one elaborated by the Library of Congress. The diacritical marks complicate the text a little but it avoids using double letters for a letter. Persian words have been more complicated a choice. Many of the Persian words in the text come from Armenian sources are spelled in the Armenian alphabet. An attempt was made to transliterate them as correctly as possible according to the system used in the International Journal of Middle East Studies and not to use the Armenian transliteration system since it makes the words difficult to understand for Persian speakers. They remain difficult to understand for Armenian speakers unfamiliar with Persian..

Whenever possible the English translation of the travellers has been used. For Jean Chardin there is an original English edition which has been used as much as possible. Other passages have been translated from the latest French edition. For Jean Baptiste Tavernier there is no English translation available for his travels in Persia. Only a

partial translation of his travels to India exists. The necessary passages have been translated. For Armenian sources such as Arak'el the translations are also my own.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Its body scattered like many droplets of oil over the deep waters of other civilisations, never confounded with them yet dependant on them...one could think in such a way of the Armenians, mountain dwelling peasants who at the time of our Renaissance become international merchants from the Philippines to Amsterdam....¹

Fernand Braudel

That Fernand Braudel was unaware of the long history of the Kingdom of Armenia is excusable. Today the Armenians are known as a diaspora, although they have had a kingdom and a national history. The statement that they were transformed from mountain dwelling peasants to international merchants, however, is surprising for any historian. By the seventeenth century, which is the period of this study they had long been a diaspora. The history of the Armenians after the fall of Cilicia cannot be treated on a political or national basis. Because historical studies were typically confined to methods that demanded the analysis of events in chronological order and were divided nationally, modern Armenian history has long remained unexplored. Not only has the emphasis on national history discouraged focused examination of a society long divested of a state, but the difficulties inherent in such research have presented serious obstacles. The Armenians, scattered across the globe, lived and traded in many different regions. The sources for research (i.e., archives), arranged nationally, reflect that disparateness. To complicate matters further, the multitude of

¹Fernand Braudel. *La Méditerranée...*, Paris 1966, vol. 2, p.136 "Son corps est dispersé éparpillé comme autant de fines gouttelettes d'huile sur les eaux profondes des autres civilisations et jamais confondue, avec elles, cependant toujours dépendantes de celle-ci... On pourrait songer pareillement aux Arméniens, paysans montagnards qui deviennent à l'époque de notre Renaissance, marchands internationaux depuis les Philippines jusqu'à Amsterdam, voire aux Parsis dans les Indes, ou même aux Chrétiens nestoriens d'Asie... L'essentiel? Accepter qu'il y ait, avec une infinité d'elles perdues au milieu d'eaux étrangères, des civilisations de *diaspora* et plus nombreuses qu'on ne le soupçonnerait au premier abord."

languages in which relevant information has been recorded makes the task a forbidding one. To add spice to the serendipity of research, events concerning the Armenians are rarely classified within a clear body of archival material, but scattered under miscellaneous headings, the selection of which often demands more luck than logic.

These circumstances necessitate the undertaking of diverse studies with narrow foci to begin to establish a foundation for a coherent image of the Armenians in a time of diaspora. Archives across the world need to be systematically searched for all related evidence. At the current stage, any generalized study would have to be expansive enough to encompass material dispersed across half of the world. Armenian activity in the seventeenth century stretched from the Philippines to Amsterdam—and as far north as Riga. This convoluted itinerary also must comprise: China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Tibet, India, Iran, Turkey, Italy, Portugal, France, England, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Sweden, Latvia, and several locations in the former Soviet Union, such as Erevan and Moscow. Additionally, such research must not only take into account places where the Armenians settled, but also the vast areas where they traded. Recognizing the formidability of these obstacles, it is somewhat surprising to note the recent interest in tackling the history of the Armenians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In recent years scholars, mainly those working in France and in the former Soviet Union, have produced several important books and articles pertaining to the subject, facilitating the initiation of more informed inquiries. Furthermore, an effort has been made to gather into the Armenian Republic's archives materials pertinent to Armenia's past. Consequently, the archives concerning Safavid Armenia and Armenians in Safavid Persia are now for the most part preserved in Erevan at the

Matenadaran, as well as in Isphahan.² The result of this effort has led the Academy of Sciences in the Republic of Armenia to become the most important center for the study of Early Modern Armenian history. The foremost specialists of this period have been Hagop P'ap'azyan,³ an iranist, and the late Levon Xač'ikyan, a specialist of modern Armenian economic history. The latter's daughter⁴ is now continuing his work. Because of the requisite primacy of marxist and hegelian analysis in any historical study made in the former Soviet Republic, subjects relating to economy and trade were a natural choice.

In France, Fernand Braudel's expansive studies on European trade and economy made any research on trade fashionable. His theory of *longue durée*⁵ has had significant impact on historians across the world. The extent of that impact on the writings of economic historians is evident enough to remain unenumerated. Among the less consciously noticed consequences of this view of events has been a departure from purely national history, for the study of trends with a wider focus. He is often perceived as a marxist by scholars in the United States, chiefly because of the materialist aspect of his approach to the analysis of history, and his dismissal of most political events as mere fireflies in the face of trends evolving over the course of

²There is archival material kept in New Julfa's All Saviour's Church in Isphahan.

³ Xač'ikyan, L. S. P'ap'azyan, H. *Hovhannes Ter-Davt'yan Ĵulaycc'u Hašvetumarə*. [*The Account Book of Hovhannes Ter-Davt'yan of Julfa*.] Erevan: 1984.

P'apazian, H. D. *Persidskiye Dokumenty Matenadarana: Ukazi*. [*Matenadaran, Erevan. Firman: A Collection of Firman of Safavid Shahs issued for Armenians*.] Erevan: 1956, 1959.

⁴Xač'ikyan, Š. L. *Nor Ĵulayi hay vajarakanut'yunə ev nra arevtratntesakan kaperə rusastani het XVII ev XVIII dərərur*. [*The Merchants of New Julfa and their commercial ties with Russia in the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries*.] Erevan: 1988. Is the most important work on Julfa to ever be published.

⁵ Many economic historians now study four hundred year trends instead of concentrating on the once traditional half a century or century periods, furthermore the focus is on vast regions such as the Mediterranean or the Indian Ocean. Adherence to a Marxist theory of history makes economic and cultural events the essential factors responsible for historical trends, thereby neglecting traditional political and diplomatic history.

several centuries. He himself has, however, staunchly disclaimed any dependency on marxist theories of history. Braudel's fame alone has spurred interest in domains that had remained esoteric and obscure to most historians. He has drawn attention to the importance of different diasporas as distinct cultural entities, even in a country as fiercely nationalistic as France. He also has pointed specifically to the important role the Armenians played in seventeenth century trade and economy.

The Jews are soon in competition with the Armenians, who in the mid-seventeenth century, charter ships for the Occident, go there themselves and become the brokers for Shah Abbas' economic expansion. Such are the successors in the Levant of the rich bourgeoisie of Italian merchants, once masters of the entire Mediterranean.⁶

Since he first published these words in 1947, every article published in France, which is relevant to the subject, cites him. He has been quoted so widely and his assertion repeated so often that it has become an accepted fact that the Armenians had an important economic role in the seventeenth century. This fact remains, if not entirely, still direly in need of verification. He is cited here not only as a source of intellectual inspiration, but as a source for methodology. The methodology used here is not precisely that of the *longue durée*, since a study covering sixty years does not strictly qualify. However, the methods, in so far as they depart from a focus on national events, are not far from most economic studies which follow Braudel's model. Without the tools provided by the *longue durée*, a study such as this would be impracticable. Were this study to confine itself to political events alone, it would relegate itself to a study of Iranian or French policy towards the Armenians. Given that the Armenians were not the main concern of either the Iranians or the French, it would elucidate little about the character of the Armenians' role in the international

⁶ Fernand Braudel, *ibid.* p. 70. "Les Juifs sont d'ailleurs bientôt concurrencé par les Arméniens qui, au XVIIe siècle frétrent des navires pour l'Occident, s'y rendront eux-mêmes et deviendront les courtiers de l'expansion de Shah Abbas. Tels sont dans le Levant les successeurs de la riche bourgeoisie des marchands italiens, un temps maîtresse de la Méditerranée entière."

trade of the time. Of course this is not to suggest that the political milieu in which the Armenians operated were of negligible import. It simply needs appropriate emphasis relative to other larger, weightier factors. Most political events, save those producing real transformations on material life (e.g., the displacement of the Armenians to Isphahan from Armenia), are deemphasized here. The events which are of interest are those which in some way affected the quality of the life of the community studied. The period examined here is approximately sixty years, and consequently does not meet the prerequisite duration for a *longue durée* study. It is justifiable, however, since for the Armenians research is not yet at a point where looking for large trends is fruitful. Establishing some basic facts is the most one can hope for at this stage.

The above quotation, in which Braudel posits the importance in international trade of the Armenian diaspora, ultimately relies upon the French traveller Jean Baptiste Tavernier as its main source. Despite the fact that Braudel seemed to have had knowledge of Armenian manuscripts concerning Armenian commerce,⁷ he apparently never consulted them. Nevertheless, the attention he paid to this subject, as well as the publication in French and English of a major article by an Armenian,⁸ inspired

⁷Ganj čap'oy, kšroy, ew drama' bolor ašxarhi.....Caxiwk' ew i xndroy hayc'man Julacc'i Xačaturi ordi Paron Petrosin. Tpiwk ew hawanut'camb cramec vehi Tomay Vartapeti ew srbap'ayl episkoposi Vanandec'woy Tann Golteanc'. yAmi Teān 1699 yunvari 16 y Amsterdam. [A *treasury of measures, wights and currencies of the entire world*...printed in Amsterdam in 1699] is partly attributed to Konstand Julacc'i, who headed a school specialized in international trade in New Julfa. See Kéram Kevonian, footnote 9.

⁸Khachikian, Levon. "Le registre d'un marchand arménien en Perse, en Inde et au Tibet (1682-1693)." *Annales* XXII, 2 (March-April 1967): 231-278.

Khachikian, Levon. "The Ledger of the Merchant Hovannes Joughayetsi," *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Calcutta VIII, 3 (1966): 153-186.

scholars in Europe to start publishing the first serious articles,⁹ to complement the work being done in the former Soviet Republic of Armenia.

In an attempt to achieve better definition and categorize information into graspable sets, certain trade historians have come up with the concept of the 'trade settlement.'

Whatever the earliest form of cross cultural trade, the most common institutional form after the coming of city life was the trade settlement. Commercial specialists would remove themselves physically from their home community and go and live as aliens in another town, usually not a fringe town, but a life important to the life of the host community. There the merchants would settle down and learn the language, the customs, and the commercial ways of their host. They could then serve as cross-cultural brokers, helping and encouraging trade between their host society and people of their own origin who moved along the trade route. The merchants who began with a single trade settlement abroad tended to set up a whole series of trade settlements in alien towns. The result was an interrelated net of commercial communities forming a trade network, or trade diaspora—a term that comes from the Greek word for scattering, as in the sowing of grain. Trade communities of merchants living among ancients in association networks are to be found on every continent and back through time to the very beginning of urban life.¹⁰

The term "trading diaspora" often found in works on trade and economy was first coined in 1971, to refer to "a nation of socially interdependent, but spatially dispersed communities."¹¹ One of the most important centers where Armenian merchants had settled, or been deported is a suburb of Isphahan in Iran, called New Julfa, which was named after a their native village, Julfa, located in historic Armenia. Initial studies

⁹Kevonian, K. "Marchands arméniens au 17ième siècle." *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, 16, (1975): 199-244. Ferrier, R. W. "The Armenians and the East India Company in Persia in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries" *The Economic History Review*, second series, XXVI, 1(February 1973): 38-62. Gulbenkian, Roberto. "Philippe de Zagly, marchand arménien de Julfa, et l'établissement du commerce persan en Courlande en 1696." *Revue des études arméniennes*, 7(n.s.)9(1970): 361-99. Van Rooy, Silvio. "Armenian Merchant Habits as Mirrored in the 17-18th Century Amsterdam Documents." *Revue des études arméniennes*, 3 (n.s.) (1966):347-357. These are a few of the best examples.

¹⁰ Philip Curtin , *Cross Cultural Trade in World History*, p.2

¹¹By Abner Cohen in "Cultural Strategies in the Organization of Trading Diasporas" in Claude Mesailoux ed. *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa*. London: 1971

have demonstrated New Julfa to be a community of merchants, and a major trade center for the Armenians in the seventeenth century.¹² Can New Julfa be thought of as a trade settlement, and the Armenians included under the rubric “trade diaspora” like any other?

K. N. Chaudhuri's postulate that the nation in diaspora which constitutes a “trade diaspora” necessarily has a different outlook from merchants belonging to a nation¹³—the assumption being that the latter serve national interests—immediately begs the question: how do the Armenians fit into this schema? Did they serve the interests of their host countries such as India, Holland, Russia, and especially Iran? Or did they manifest ‘national’ interests of their own, despite the absence of an independent state? Could it be that the merchants’ sole aim, beyond simple survival, was the expedient pursuit of lucre, that they had no underlying political goals? What role did the Armenian Church play for the merchants in the absence of a national state? These are some of the questions about the specific position of the New Julfa merchant community which will be addressed in this study as their history is being examined.

The wealthy Armenian merchants were called *khwājas*, a Persian title spelled ‘*Khoja*’ hereafter. The term itself is of obscure origin, but by the sixteenth century was widely used throughout the region as an honorific title.¹⁴ A clarification of the Armenian merchants’ place in the larger picture of trade in the Early Modern period would be of interest to other researchers. Scholars writing on trade and economy in modern times have expressed interest in the question, but Armenian being largely

¹² There is a history of Julfa by Ter yovancanc' which amply demonstrates this. Also Carswell and Gregorian.

¹³ See next quotation in the text and footnote 15.

¹⁴ Lco. Xojayakan Kapitalo. [The Merchant Capital of the Khodjas] Erevan 1934.

inaccessible, even the best attempts at forming a general picture have left much to be desired. They have remained at best a summary of the abovementioned articles written in French or English.¹⁵ Scholars researching trade in the Indian Ocean seem equally eager to know more about the subject, but confine themselves to referring to it *in passim*:

Merchants and traders in our period conducted business through closely knit groups, irrespective of their location; whether they lived at home or in foreign lands, that is how they worked. Furthermore, Jewish and Armenian merchants alone had no proper homeland to which they eventually hoped to return. The behavior and outlook of these particular members of a nation in diaspora were likely to be very different from those travelling merchants with solid connections at home. Even the Armenians living in Kashgar, Dehli, and Hugli in the seventeenth century could point to their own suburb in Isphahan, the little town of Julfa on the far side of Zayandah-Rud, as a national home. Their fine brick-built church, with its elegant and classic lines, opened its door to the members of the English East India Company who could find no consecrated ground to bury their dying colleagues.¹⁶

This passage by K. N. Chaudhuri well demonstrates some of the impasses and difficulties inherent in such a dearth of accessible information. That the outlook of “merchants of a nation in diaspora” was very different than those of the Dutch, English or French for example, certainly needs further evidentiary substantiation before such a definition may be so boldly asserted. Although there is little question that New Julfa functioned as the major center for Armenian merchants, the precise character of its central position needs to be more thoroughly established. Even more problematic for anyone familiar with Armenian history, is the unhesitating affirmation that New Julfa constituted a ‘national home.’ The proof given for this statement ironically goes counter to that very argument. The “fine brick church with

¹⁵ The best comprehensive study of this sort is rather recent: Philip D. Curtin *Cross cultural Trade in World History*. Chapter 9: “Overland Trade of the Seventeenth Century: Armenian carriers between Europe and East Asia.” pp. 179-206.

¹⁶ Chaudhuri K. N. *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the rise of Islam to 1750*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. pp. 225-226.

its classical lines” reproduced on the same page as the passage indeed manifests “classical lines,” but not those of an Armenian church—rather those of a Safavid mosque. Armenians have a long history of church building¹⁷ to which the church in New Julfa bears no external resemblance whatsoever. Even had it been so, such evidence alone would not suffice. This study will provide more probative substantiation as to whether or not New Julfa was actually a center and whether it was perceived as a homeland. An attempt to resolve all of the diverse issues raised above of course necessitates an examination of the process by which New Julfa became a center for the Armenians and an important trade settlement.¹⁸

Therefore, the first part of this study will devote itself to elucidating the history of the Armenian merchants in New Julfa.¹⁹ It is important to define their position within the larger context of Safavid Iran, as well as examine their organization. A first and basic aim is to achieve sharper definition of the Armenian merchants themselves: who they were, how and where they travelled, what system of accounting they used²⁰, and how their business was organised. This encompasses an analysis of the administrative organization of the community in Isphahan, a close examination of the trading routes, and a familiarization with the currency and other methods of exchange

¹⁷See the series published on surviving Armenian Churches: *Documents of Armenian Architecture*. 20 volumes. A. and A. Manoukian eds. Faculty of Architecture of the Milan Polytechnic. Milano 1968-1989.

¹⁸ See article by Vartan Gregorian, footnote 22, there were Armenians who settled in Julfa at the end of the 16th century before the deportations by Shah Abbas.

¹⁹ For the deportation of the Armenians by the Safavid Shah there is a seventeenth century source: Arak'el Davrizhec'i Vardapet. *Girk' patmut'eanc' šaradreal Vardapetin Arak'eloy Davrēzhač'woy: gawarin Araratoy ev masin Golt'an en minč'ew yawart patmagrut'eans aylev i hišum asteal masnavorabar asti ev anti*. [A Book of Histories composed by Arak'el of Tabriz.] Hams Elawdamum 1669. Amsterdam: 1669. Valaršapat: 1896. Erevan: 1990.

²⁰ It is now possible to examine this seriously since the publication of the account book, published in its entirety in Erevan in 1984. See following footnote.

used for trading. For this, Armenian publications and sources²¹ are consulted, coupled with material gleaned from French travel accounts²² which often contain much useful information concerning merchant affairs, mingled with the descriptive accounts of exotic foods, customs and scenery.

A brief analysis of the language used by the Armenian merchants of Isphahan in their account books and their contracts is provided as well. The language peculiar to these records is extremely obscure, demanding not only fluent knowledge of both Persian and Armenian but knowledge of Turkish, Tibetan and other languages as well. Despite the fact that the accounts are written in Armenian script, Persian is the most important, as a speaker of modern Armenian would not comprehend anything beyond certain pronouns and the alphabet. Samples of commercial contracts and excerpts of account books illustrate this phenomenon.²³ The essential question is what could be the rationale behind this extremely profound persianization of the language.

An excellent article exists in English which examines the history of the community of Armenians of New Julfa,²⁴ but it does not, however, delve into the

²¹ one main source relied upon has recently been published in Erevan. Xačikyan, L. S. P'ap'azyan, H. *Hovhannes Ter-Dav't'yan Julayec'u Hašvetumara*. [*The Account Book of Hovhannes Ter-Dav't'yan of Julfa*.] Erevan: 1984.

²² Chiefly J.B. Tavernier, but the list is rather extensive to be given here, look at the section on travelers in the bibliography.

²³ The account book mentioned in footnote 19 and also documents quoted in Xačikyan, Š. L. *Nor Julayi hay vajafakanut'yuna ev nra arevratntesakan kaperə rusastani het XVII ev XVIII darerum*. [*The Merchants of New Julfa and their commercial ties with Russia in the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries*.] Erevan: 1988 as well as in Xačikyan, Š. L. *Nor Julayi hay vajafakanut'yuna ev nra arevratntesakan kaperə rusastani het XVII ev XVIII darerum*. [*The Merchants of New Julfa and their commercial ties with Russia in the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries*.] Erevan: 1988. and in Tēr Yohancanc, Yarut'iwn T'. *Patmut'iwn Nor Julayi. (Spahan)*. [*History of New Julfa. (Isphahan)*.] Nor Julfa: Amenaprkič Vank, 1980. First posthumous edition 1880.

²⁴ Gregorian, Vartan. "Minorities of Isphahan: The Armenian Community of Isphahan, 1587-1722." *Iranian Studies*, vol. VII, 2, (1974): 652-681.. There is also a very short article by E. M> Herzig in the Pembroke papers written in 1990, it makes ample use of Arak'el but adds little to our knowledge about the deportations.

question of international trade. Everything else has been published either in Armenia, or in New Julfa itself.²⁵ More important is the *History of New Julfa*, first published in the nineteenth century, based on a thorough search of the archives kept at the All Saviour's Church in Isphahan.²⁶ It is, of course, imperative to remember the context in which the Armenians lived and traded. Although there will be no specific emphasis on the structure and policies of the Iranian Safavid state itself, it often will be referred to, and its policy towards the Armenians examined.²⁷ In addition to their situation within Iran, the peregrinations of the New Julfa merchants will require references to other important centers of international trade.

Over the past twenty years several articles,²⁸ and at least two dissertations,²⁹ have attempted to clarify the role Armenian merchants have played in the commercial ties

²⁵Daneghian, L. G. *Arak'el Davrizhec'u erkə orpes Sefian Irani XVII dari patmut'yan skzbnalbuyr.* [*The work of Arakel of Tabriz as a Source for the History of Seventeenth Century Safavid Iran.*] Erevan: 1978.

Leo. *Xojayakan Kapitalə.* [*The Merchant Capital of the Khodjas*] Erevan 1934.

Minasean, L. *Nor Julayi tparanə u ir tpağrac grk'erə; 1636-1972.* [*The Printing Press of New Julfa and the Books Printed There, 1636-1972.*] New Julfa: 1972.

P'apazian, H. D. *Persidskiye Dokumenty Matcnadarana: Ukazi.* [*Matenadaran, Erevan. Firmans: A Collection of Faramin of Safavid Shahs issued for Armenians.*] Erevan: 1956, 1959.

Tēr Yohancanç, Yarus'iwn T'. *Patmut'iwn Nor Julayi. (Spahan).* [*History of New Julfa. (Isphahan).*] Nor Julfa: Amenap'rkic' Vank, 1980. First posthumous edition 1880.

Xaçikyan, Š. L. *Nor Julayi hay vajarkanut'yuna ev nra arevtratntesakan kapera rusastani het XVII ev XVIII darrerum.* [*The Merchants of New Julfa and their commercial ties with Russia in the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries.*] Erevan: 1988.

²⁶Tēr Yohancanç, Yarus'iwn T'. *Patmut'iwn Nor Julayi. (Spahan).* [*History of New Julfa. (Isphahan).*] Nor Julfa: Amenap'rkic' Vank, 1980. First posthumous edition 1880.

²⁷Firmans specifically concerning the Armenians have been gathered and published in P'apazian, H. D. *Persidskiye Dokumenty Matcnadarana: Ukazi.* [*Matenadaran, Erevan. Firmans: A Collection of Faramin of Safavid Shahs issued for Armenians.*] Erevan: 1956, 1959. 3 volumes. They do not cover the entire Safavid period, they stop mid- seventeenth century.

²⁸see footnote 9

Kevonian, K. "Marchands arméniens au 17ième siècle." *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, 16, (1975): 199-244.

of the European nations and their respective trading companies with Persia, India, and the Ottoman Empire. The first study, by Ferrier,³⁰ contributes to an understanding of the ties between the English East India Company and the Armenians. R. Ferrier is also the author of the chapter on trade in the sixth volume of the Cambridge History of Iran. He stresses clearly that the Armenians were the only exporters of Persian silk. This is clear in the archival material he has consulted in England. Once again however there is no more than a statement about their role. His contribution is great nevertheless as he is the only one to have attempted to study Safavid trade in a scholarly way.

A more recent one by Steinmann concentrates on the production and trade of silk in the sixteenth century. That work highlights the monopoly held by Shah Abbas the Great on this precious commodity, but remains silent on any further developments in the seventeenth century, or on the Armenians' role as merchants involved in the distribution of silk. Both of these works present theses which relegate the Armenian merchants to a rank of secondary interest. Both works seem unaware of the extensive research on the subject which had been the focus of the history department at the Soviet Armenian Academy of Sciences for the past two decades. However, subsequent articles by Ferrier are more conversant with that research.

Ferrier, R. W. "The Armenians and the East India Company in Persia in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries" *The Economic History Review*, second series, XXVI, 1(February 1973): 38-62. Gulbenkian, Roberto. "Philippe de Zagly, marchand arménien de Julfa, et l'établissement du commerce persan en Courlande en 1696." *Revue des études arméniennes*, 7(n.s.)9(1970): 361-99. Van Rooy, Silvio. "Armenian Merchant Habits as Mirrored in the 17-18th Century Amsterdam Documents." *Revue des études arméniennes*, 3 (n.s.) (1966):347-357.

²⁹Ferrier, R. W. *British-Persian Relations in the Seventeenth Century*. Cambridge: unpublished doctoral thesis, 1970. Steinmann, Linda. *Shah Abbas and the Royal silk Trade*. New York University, unpublished dissertation, 1986.

³⁰ He summarized the findings of his dissertation that concern the Armenians into an article: Ferrier, R. W. "The Armenians and the East India Company in Persia in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries" *The Economic History Review*, second series, XXVI, 1(February 1973): 38-62.

Although many aspects of different histories will be touched upon, and despite the wide domain explored to collect meager information, the aim here remains a modest one. The present study confines itself to the merchants of New Julfa and to exploring their international commercial ties, especially those with France. Even cursory familiarity with the sources is sufficient to demonstrate the fact that diplomatic and commercial ties at the time were often one and the same. Yet, early studies focusing on diplomatic history often fail to mention this, bypassing what often was the main incentive for a given mission. Publications in French, as well as archival material, are the sources used to shed light on their importance. Most unfortunately, the *Cahier Perse* concerning this period, which had been preserved at the archives of the Affaires Étrangères in Paris, has disappeared without a trace. The archive's earliest reference is to 1720. The anticipation of discovering important information regarding a major Persian embassy to the court of Louis XIV sadly had to content itself by contemplating a depiction of it in a painting now hanging at Versailles.³¹ A serious attempt is made to compensate for this loss through consulting a variety of other sources.³² It was judged best, however to exclude diplomatic exchanges from this study unless they were immediately relevant to the Armenians.

The central focus here will be on establishing what the Armenian participation was in the ventures of the French East India Company, which Colbert established in 1664 in order to belatedly compete with the successful English and Dutch Companies. The sources are the archives of that Company itself as well as other related archival

³¹ *Louis XIV reçoit l'ambassadeur de Perse, Mehmet Reza Beg, 19 février 1715*, Coypel, Musée de Versailles.

³² By consulting contemporary newspapers and travel accounts. *Le Fevre de Fontenay Journal historique du Voyage et des Aventures singulieres de l'ambassadeur de Perse en France*. Paris 1715. Also published in the *Mecure galant*. Feb. 1715.

materials,³³ such as the French Colonial Archives.³⁴ Special attention is devoted to one of the notable pioneers of the Company, Martin Marcara Avanchins. Naturalized French in order to fulfill his mission for the Company, he was an Armenian merchant of Isphahan. The preservation in court records of his later litigations against the Company ironically have made his sorry fate a scholar's good fortune.

The choice of working on French relations may seem incongruous at first, especially considering the relative insignificance of the new French East India Company compared to the Dutch or the English companies. Notwithstanding the fact that it was essentially a failure prior to the eighteenth century and the ventures of Dupleix in India, there are many factors that speak in favor of this choice. It is evident that France under Louis XIV was not only a major power but the cultural center of Europe. Before the Second World War changed this balance, the most important European language in Iran was French, and both the administration and the educational system were copied on the French models. Despite this, the origins of Persia's ties with France never have been adequately explored. Within the temporal scope of this study, the vast majority of the travellers to Persia were of French nationality. For the period 1581-1725, which corresponds to the time frame for European exploration and expansion, there was an unprecedented number of European travellers to Persia:

A breakdown by nationality yields some interesting statistics. Twenty-six of the travellers were French, seventeen British (including one anonymous author who traveled with the Shirley Brothers), seven German or German speaking, six Italian, five Portuguese, four Dutch, and two Spanish. There was also one Fleming, one Pole, and one Swede. Thus despite their coming from the most populous nation in Europe, the large French majority, is not merely a result of the fact that the French simply travelled more widely than other national groups, though statistically of course they may have. To better

³³ The archives for this early Company are at the Bibliothèque nationale, after 1720 the Archives of the French East India Company are kept in the port of Lorient in Brittany, a major port at the time.

³⁴ Classified within the Archives nationales, located in the Marais in Paris.

understand the complexity of the extent and number of seventeenth-century travels, one must consider other factors as well. Some of these are less tangible, such as national interests and goals, internal conditions of the respective European nations, and the patterns and timing of their overseas expansions, all carefully correlated historically.³⁵

A comparison is drawn with Armenian commercial collaboration with the English East India Company both in order to pinpoint their participation and to emphasize the contrast that exists between these two cases. As this inquiry into the nature of Armenian trade progressed it became impossible to overlook an element of high importance in Franco-Armenian relations of the time—religious friction. The further research into the French archives advanced, the clearer it became that it would be a major *faux pas* to disassociate trade and religion in the study of seventeenth-century France. While French emissaries to Isphahan were merchants, most of the others were members of religious orders, mainly the Capuchins.

An examination of the seventy travellers to Persia from this point of view produces the following statistics: 24 travellers were members of religious orders: 17 were attached to embassies or in the service of foreign countries; 12 were merchants or involved in trade; 12 were tourists; 3 were on scientific or scholarly missions; and two had purposes that are either unknown or uncertain.³⁶

Religious zeal in France, which manifested itself after the proclamation of the *De propaganda fide* and the establishment of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda in Rome in 1622,³⁷ which concerned itself with missions to heathen countries and administration where there was no church hierarchy, is well known. Matters of faith continued to remain a priority under the reign of Louis XIV. One of the hypotheses tested here is that French commercial transactions with the Armenians were often

³⁵ Jack Lewis Vartoogian *The image of Armenia in European Travel Accounts of the Seventeenth Century*. Unpublished dissertation, Columbia University, 1974, p. 23.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.26.

³⁷ *De propaganda fide* was the cardinalitial commission which preceded the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda created by Pope Gregory XV in the papal bull "Inscrutabili Divinae" on June 6, 1622. Both were The Roman Catholic church's efforts to meet the spiritual needs of heathen peoples. F. L. Cross, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957) p. 1112.

seriously affected by religious differences. A purely economic analysis would not suffice for comprehending the entire nature of these relationships. Additionally, the economic role of the Protestants in the seventeenth century is well known to anyone familiar with French history. The importance of their financial and commercial activities is amply documented and has been well studied.³⁸ It is curious that no one has noticed, or at least acknowledged, the fact that two of the best known of all travellers, Jean Baptiste Tavernier and Jean Chardin, were both Protestants. No mere coincidence, this has many important implications which will be examined. It would be a mistake to try to explain economic policies, failures and successes, by means of the religious factor alone.³⁹

The time frame for this study has been determined by the historical events which concern the two poles which define the subject: the settlement of the Armenians in Isphahan and the French East India Company. The creation of the French East India Company by Colbert in 1664 is the *terminus a quo* for most of the archival material, although this was not the first French attempt at Eastern trade. The Armenians were settled in Isphahan by Shah Abbas at the very beginning of the seventeenth century.⁴⁰ The prosperity they attained in Persia came to a halt with the end of Safavid rule in 1722, when they are said to have started leaving Isphahan for India, Italy and Russia. In the 1720s there was also an unrelated but major structural modification in the French East India Company.⁴¹ Both of these events determine the *Terminus ad quem*.

³⁸Lüthy, H. *La Banque protestante en France, t. I, Dispersion et regroupement (1685-1730)*, Paris: 1959. Dessert, Daniel. *Argent, pouvoir et société au Grand Siècle*. Paris: Fayard, 1984.

³⁹The only scholar who has studied the Armenians in France explains French economic measures against them by religious friction alone. See articles by H. Kévorkian in the bibliography.

⁴⁰As mentioned before some Armenians had settled there before the deportation.

⁴¹A good analysis in: Haudrère, P. *La Compagnie des Indes Françaises au XVIIIème siècle (1719-1795)*. Paris: Librairie de l'Inde éditeur, 1989.

The proposition which is tested here is the affirmation, yet undocumented but often reiterated, that Armenian merchants functioned as very important intermediaries for Western trade with the East. F. Braudel believed that Jewish and Armenian merchants were the successors to the Italians in the Mediterranean and elsewhere.⁴² To establish or deny how well founded this may be as a general statement, several other pieces of the research puzzle are necessary, among them a close study of the Armenians in India and South East Asia, as well as a study of their interaction with the Dutch. A search in the archives of Venice and Livorno would shed more light, as would a study of material, yet unlocated, for their trade in the White Sea region. This study limits itself to their role with the French, but much reference will be made to their roles with the English and the Dutch both for purposes of comparison and for reaching a conclusion. There is a study being undertaken at Oxford on the Armenians and their trade in the Indian Ocean. The Armenians are used as an example in a theoretical study of pre-Modern oceanic trade. This dissertation is not yet completed. We unfortunately have had no access to any information it will bring.

The chapters on the merchants of New Julfa should be of interest to anyone concerned with Safavid Persia as well as with trade in the Middle East or in the Indian Ocean. Aside from the one article mentioned here, one not particularly concerned with merchants and trade, there is nothing in English or French that is accessible to a wider range of researchers.⁴³ The chapter on Marcara Avanchinz is a biographical one. It is not a complete biography, but the archives did yield considerable information about the adventures of a seventeenth-century merchant. That is a rarity in itself, but truly exceptional in the case Armenian merchants. The

⁴² Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* Volume 2, p. 70.

⁴³ See footnote 22.

present study hopes that the information drawn from the archives of France and from elsewhere will contribute to the documentation and understanding of a period in the history of the Armenians which has remained little explored, while modestly bringing to light unknown elements significant to other domains.

A separate section at the end is devoted to analyzing the sources used here, as well as some of the difficulties inherent in them.

CHAPTER II: THE FORMATION OF THE COMMUNITY OF NEW JULFA

'He brought into the Capital City a Colony of *Armenians*, who were a Laborious and Industrious People, and had nothing in the world when they came there; but in the space of thirty Years they grew so exceeding Rich, that there were above threescore Merchants among them, who, one whit another, were worth from an hundred thousand Crowns, to two Million, in Money and Merchandize."¹

Scholarship on Safavid administration, although not directly concerned with the Armenian merchants, has contributed to the understanding of their position within Safavid society. It is fortunate that there now exists a small body of social analysis which transcend suppositions of temperament and character so dear to nineteenth century historians.² John Malcom's opinion, based on the accounts of the travellers, that the Armenians "were far more industrious than the Persians" and that they advanced the general prosperity of the Empire,³ is regrettably given as the sole explanation for their importance in some rather recent articles. By contrast, V. Minorsky's affirmation that the Armenians were the agents of the Shah⁴ demands deeper consideration. A study of the data gathered in the introduction of the *Tadhkirat al-Muluk* ("A Manual of Administration") by V. Minorsky, along with Professor Savory's social analysis, establishes an informed hypothesis of the basis of Armenian prominence in the silk trade. Had social circumstances and royal edicts been completely detrimental, their inclination to work hard could not have been on its own sufficient impetus for their achieved success. On the other hand it would be a

¹ Sir John Chardin, *Travels in Persia 1673- 1677*, (London: 1927) Dover's reprint 1988, p. 139.

² Most of them are by Roger Savory, some are cited in our bibliography.

³ Malcom, p. 554.

⁴ The passage from which this quotation was taken concerns the reign of Shah Abbas only.

mistake to dismiss John Malcom's statement out of hand: several sources confirm the fact that the Armenian merchants were hard working and thrifty.⁵

More importantly information in della Valle and other travellers confirms that their success was largely due to their own mercantile strategy and merit.⁶ There were, however, several important social factors both negative and positive which contributed to their success. The first task is to show how and when the Armenians were settled in Iran. Only then can these social factors properly be considered.

It is important to retrace the history of Armenian settlement in Iran because too many misconceptions persist. The circumstances that ruled the lives of the community were by no means constant through the whole Safavid era. They depended on the varied policies of each ruler, who in turn took into account the political expediencies of the moment. The focus of attention on Shah Abbas' reign by most scholarship has led to misguided generalizations about the Armenians' situation in Iran during the reigns of subsequent Safavid shahs. Furthermore, only one aspect of Shah 'Abbas' policies has been stressed: Shah Abbas as the protector and benefactor of the Armenians.⁷ This is far from being an accurate image of what actually transpired during his reign. The travellers' copious depiction of the wealth and prosperity of a few merchants of New Julfa has contributed to a distorted image

⁵The sources for this information are the travellers, those who travelled there at the beginning of the century as well as those who encountered them later. Some examples are Fryer, Tavernier and Chardin. Linda Steinman in her dissertation dismisses this point entirely stating that it is entirely due to the prejudice of the travellers who were Christians themselves. She does not however offer any convincing arguments for this. Given that many passages, for example John Fryer's account, do not compare Armenian merchants to Muslim ones but to the European merchants themselves, affirming that they are thriftier and more hardworking etc...Why would a European be better disposed toward an Armenian Christian than a European Christian? See John Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia*, (London: 1909-1915) vol. II, p. 249.

⁶For a full discussion of this, refer to chapter 5 of this study

⁷In R. Savory, as well as older studies such as the one on the fall of the Safavids by Lawrence Lockhart.

of the larger, harsher reality⁸ The second misconception which needs rectification is of chronological order. The Armenian deportations were not confined to the rule of Shah 'Abbas, but sporadically took place over the span of a century.

Safavid Campaigns in the Caucasus and the Deportation of the Armenians into Iran.

Throughout the sixteenth century and at the beginning of the seventeenth, the southern Caucasus , comprising the territories of historic Armenia, Georgia and present day Azerbaidjan, as well as that of Iranian Azerbaidjan, was devastated by the intermittent but brutal wars between the Ottomans and the Safavids. Both the Safavids and the Ottomans engaged in mass deportations of local populations and to a 'scorched earth' policy which devastated the entire region. Both sides systematically carried out a deliberate policy which entailed the razing of villages and towns and the burning of crops and harvests, leaving the enemy without resources within the territories conquered. The Safavid and Ottoman rulers each considered the local inhabitants, Moslem and Christian alike, subjects of the opposing forces; thus they were taken prisoner and deported to major cities of the victor. For example, when Sultan Selim conquered the city of Tabriz in 1514, many of the inhabitants were deported to Constantinople. Among them were three thousand Armenian Christians.⁹ Their presence in Tabriz at that date attests to the existence of a large Armenian community earlier, in the Aq Qoyunlu capital, before the Safavids came to power. The first Safavid Shah, Isma'il (r. 1501-24) and his successor Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524-

⁸The best source for a history of the Armenians of New Julfa is: Ter Yovhanc', H. Patmut'iwn *Nor Julayi.*, first edition, (Julfa: 1880), translated into Ašxarabar (Modern Armenian) by P. Petrossian, second edition (Julfa: 1980). It was first published in 1880 several years after it had been written, after careful research in the Julfa archives and a study of the relevant Armenian historians for the deportations under Shah Abbas.

⁹ Gregorian, Vartan. "Minorities of Isphahan: The Armenian Community of Isphahan, 1587-1722." *Iranian Studies*, vol. VII, 2, (1974): 652-681. p. 658.

76) waged war on their enemies with similar techniques and tactics. Despite the erroneous opinion the European travellers held about him as a weakling and a "mere voluptuary"¹⁰, it was Shah Tahmasp who was to become the master of this strategy.

The Deportations under Shah Tahmasp

Whenever mention is made of the deportations of the Armenians to Iran, it immediately evokes only the name of Shah 'Abbas the First. However, the first deportations of the local inhabitants of historic Armenia by the Safavids predate by seventy years the albeit massive program instigated by Shah 'Abbas I in 1604. In his wars against the Ottomans Shah Tahmasp made extensive use of the 'scorched earth' policy. He had the entire area between Tabriz and the Ottoman frontier laid waste, "so that no trace of grain or blade of grass remained."¹¹ When the Ottoman armies reached that area, already stretching the limits of their long lines of supply, they were confronted with the urgent and formidable task of gathering provisions for their army. The destruction wrought by the Safavid army was so systematic that no food or potable water could be found in the region. Needless to say, the local population suffered the effects of the violence, famine and thirst far longer than either army. The region did not undergo this radical devastation just once. Over the two decades following the 1533/34 war, Shah Tahmasp's army waged four more campaigns against the Ottomans in the Caucasus. A peace treaty, signed in Amasya in 1555, provided Iran a thirty year respite from Ottoman attacks. Through these intermittent wars the Iranians had moved from a purely defensive posture to an offensive one. In the course of these campaigns the deportation and assassination of local populations

¹⁰Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids*, (Cambridge: 1980) p. 57.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 62.

became a matter of strategy. Very large numbers of Georgian, Circassian and Armenian prisoners were deported to Iran. The campaign of 1533/4 alone brought 30,000 prisoners into Iran.¹² An Armenian priest, chronicling those dark times, expressed his grief in his explanation for the brutality of Armenia's fate. True to classical Armenian historiography, he can only resort to the usual formula—the pain and the destruction have come upon his people as a consequence of past sins:

There came an epidemic of death. How many fathers and mothers were rendered sonless and daughterless, how many pretty brides and bridegrooms separated, and how many brothers and sisters died the same night? Who can recount the sorrow and misery of parents and families, loved ones and those of friends, only God Who created them knows. And all of these came upon us because of our sins.¹³

The majority of the prisoners brought to Iran under Tahmasp were women and children; the men were often killed on the spot. When the next wave of massive deportations occurred in 1603/4, the newly transplanted Armenians and Georgians found among the descendants of these women and children a well established, albeit mostly islamized community.

Shah Tahmasp had introduced into the state...the Circassians, Georgians and Armenians termed the *ghulams* of the Shah, who after conversion to Islam, had been trained for service either in the army or in some branch of the administration of the royal household. The term *ghulam* invites an obvious comparison to the Ottoman *qapi-qullari*, or slaves of the Porte: indeed the term *qullar* soon entered into Safavid usage too.¹⁴

Safavid religious policy towards its non-Shiite subjects fluctuated with each ruler. In addition to the Christians there were Jews, Zoroastrians and Sunni muslims under their jurisdiction.¹⁵ That Shah Tahmasp was a religious bigot is rather well attested,

¹²R. Savory, p. 66.

¹³Hovannes Art ėi šec'i is quoted by Leo. This translation is from: Vartan Gregorian *IS* VII, p. 659.

¹⁴R. Savory, p. 79.

¹⁵For the only thorough study of Safavid religious policy, especially under Shah Abbas, see Vartan Gregorian's article in *IS* VII, pp. 652-680.

because of the famous incident with Anthony Jenkinson. Jenkinson was received in a royal audience in 1562, in his mission to complete negotiations for British trade privileges:

All went well until the Shah discovered that Jenkinson was Christian: "Oh thou unbeleever" he said " we have no neede to have friendship with the unbeleevvers." Jenkinson was abruptly dismissed from the royal presence, and was disconcerted to notice that, as he left, a servant followed him "with a bassinet full of sand, sifting all the way that I had gone within the said pallace."¹⁶

It seems a little surprising that the Shah would be as uninformed of the religion of an Englishmen. Jenkinson might have misunderstood a subtle, though perhaps radical, political strategy used to avoid granting the privileges the Shah was not willing to grant. He had no interest in developing commercial ties with the West. Likewise, having Christian subjects as intermediaries was of no interest to him. The travellers also portray Shah Tahmasp as a miser, who was so parsimonious that he sent his used clothing to the *Bazar* to be sold. It is said of him that no king was ever so eager to amass money.¹⁷ He taxed his Christian subjects heavily:

Every day, for the sake of his soul, many kinds of tribute and imposts are removed and people made free of them; but for most part such measures are not put into execution, because when two or three years have passed he wants the whole sum at once, as he did at the time when I was with the court in the district of Julfa, inhabited entirely by Armenians, who had been for 8 years exempted from paying tribute, when all at once he determined to demand it for the whole time past, to the loss and ruin of those poor Christians.¹⁸

What is certain, however, is that unlike his grandson 'Abbas, he did not grant any of the minorities religious freedom. Forced conversions were a policy promulgated without exception. The new converts were then required to follow a strict regimen

¹⁶Anthony Jenkinson, *Early voyages and Travels to Russia and Persia*, Hakluyt Society, first series, (London: 1886), p. 112. The original spelling has been kept for 'unbeliever' and other words.

¹⁷Sharaf al-Din Bitlisi, *Sharafnamah*, ed. Z Veliaminof-Zernof, translated and cited by R. Savory p. 60.

¹⁸Anon., *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia*. 2 vols, (London: 1939), vol. I, pp. 47-8.

and special training, after which they were either enrolled in the recently created *ghulām* regiments or, according to their skills, were employed in the royal household or the *khāṣṣa* administration. In some cases, especially for the Georgians, conversion was nominal.¹⁹ Perhaps Shah Tahmasp employed a policy of deporting minorities into Iran in order to counterbalance the power of the Qizilbash, much the way his grandson ‘Abbas instituted a policy of using the Georgians and Armenians as a political buffer in the struggle for power between the Turkic and Persian elements, the two main groups of his realm. Shah Tahmasp’s creation of special *ghulam* regiments, and the integration of Georgians and Armenians into the administration, suggests a precedent for the policies of Shah ‘Abbas. The difficulty in affirming this with certainty lies in the fact that, contrarily to the official steps taken by Shah ‘Abbas, there are no surviving records of official policy under Shah Tahmasp.²⁰

Beginning under Shah Tahmasp, Christian subjects seem to have received preferential treatment compared to the other minorities. Despite fluctuations a constant can be found in Safavid policies toward their minorities: “violent theoretical opposition towards Sunnis coupled with periodic persecutions of Zoroastrians and Jews, and a relatively benevolent attitude towards and comparatively less harsh treatment of Armenians and Georgians.”²¹

This element may add foundation to the hypothesis that Shah Tahmasp, despite the fact that his campaigns in the Caucasus were solely aimed at booty, victory and at the subjugation of other peoples by the sword of Shi’ite Islam, had begun forming a

¹⁹R. Savory, p. 65.

²⁰R. Savory, p. 65.

²¹Vartan Gregorian, p. 654.

“third force”²². Unlike Shah ‘Abbas, however, he did not deport the entire population of villages as a matter of pre-planned policy to swell the ranks of this new group. Furthermore, there is no moment during his reign where this force served as a buffer between the Persian and Turkic elements which were competing for power.

Armenian immigration to Iran under Shah Tahmasp's successors.

The first manifestations of the political existence of this third force, appeared within the Royal *haram*. The introduction of Georgian and Circassian women into the *haram* created turmoil in Shah Tahmasp's succession. Among the nine sons of Shah Tahmasp to reach adolescence, seven were the sons of Georgian and Circassian mothers. The problem was acute, the only two sons of Turcoman mothers, Muhammad Khudabanda and Isma'il, were not fit to rule.²³ Nevertheless, after many incidents within the *haram* which do not concern us here, both were to rule. Ismail II was demented, he had been imprisoned for twenty years thanks to the intrigues of the Georgian faction of the *haram*. His brother Khudabanda who succeeded him was virtually blind. As a result of the fact that one of the few accomplishments during his short reign Ismail II was to have his seven other brothers blinded, Khudabanda, who had at first been bypassed for his bad eyesight, succeeded him in 1578 under the name of Sultan Mahmud Shah. Both were weak rulers. After a period of omnipotence for his Queen Mahd-i 'Ulya, inter-tribal rivalries broke out among the Qizilbash. The tribes were in total control during most of his ten year reign.²⁴ The

²²This term is constantly used by Roger Savory in his analysis of the social position of the Christian minorities. It was coined by V. Minorsky.

²³R. Savory, p. 68.

²⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 70-75.

amirs had sworn allegiance to his son 'Abbas, when 'Abbas was a mere boy of ten. When 'Abbas reached the age of eighteen, after a public demonstration in the capital of Qazvin in favour of his son, Sultan Mahmmad Shah handed him the Royal insignia. It would take 'Abbas nearly a decade to restore order.

Weak Safavid power and control permitted the Ottomans to reconquer the lands lost to Shah Tahmasp. They reconquered Tabriz in 1685. The whole span of Sultan Mahmmad Shah's reign and the first years of 'Abbas' reign were times of destruction and turmoil for the Caucasus. After long years of internal political unrest that excluded the possibility of engaging in campaigns to retrieve territories on the periphery, Shah 'Abbas was compelled to sign a treaty with the Ottomans ceding Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kurdistan and Tabriz. From 1578 to 1589 immigration inland, from the borders into Iranian cities, to escape war and heavy taxation became an important avenue of survival. The Ottoman-Safavid wars were to last from 1578-1639. As a consequence, large numbers of Armenians left their homeland where they long had suffered to remain despite the circumstances .

The inhabitants of Armenia, under such a government did not own their own lives, because for absurd and petty reasons they were unjustly and perfidiously killed. They didn't own their property because taxes deprived them of what they had produced, all honor had taken flight under the rule of terror of the tyrants.²⁵

The Armenians were not the only ones to immigrate. Georgian noblemen are known to have offered their services to the Safavids, as well as Kurdish chieftains. These represented a small minority, compared to the large number of peasants whose land had been burned and harvests looted.²⁶ The Armenian historiography of the time reflects the harshness of Ottoman rule and the atrocities perpetrated. Arak'el Darvizhec'i described this exodus without dating the events. However, he does

²⁵H. Ter Yovhancanc', 1980, p. 15.

²⁶Vartan Gregorian, p. 660.

provide a list of names for the notables, and tells of four villages deserted after peasants and notables alike took flight.²⁷ This first wave of immigrants mainly settled in cities where an established group of their own community already existed. Isphahan, not yet a capital, but residence to a small Armenian community, was not a main destination.²⁸

The narration of the historian Arak'el is used as a source throughout this chapter. He belongs to the clergy of Ējmiacin and has a clear position. His narration was requested by two Katholikoi intent on reviving the importance of the Armenian Church. He could be thought of as biased when he described certain less well known events under Shah Abbas. His descriptions of forced conversions under Shah Abbas have been verified with other sources.²⁹

Shah 'Abbas I and the Armenians

A wave of Armenian immigration into Iranian territory took place under Shah 'Abbas at the instigation of the Armenian Katholikosate.³⁰ This episode is less well known than the deportations that took place thirteen years later, but it probably played

²⁷Arak'el Davrizhec'i Vardapet, *Girk' patmut'eanc' šaradreal Vardapet'in Arak'eloy Davrēzhač'woy: gawarin Araratoy ev masin Golt'an en minč'ew yawart patmagrut'eans aylev i hišum astcal masnavorabar asti ev anti*. [A Book of Histories composed by Arak'el of Tabriz] Hams Elawdamum 1669. (Amsterdam: 1669). Recently republished in a critical edition (Erevan 1990) *Girk' Patmut'eanc'*. For an analysis of Arak'el's position, refer to the chapter on sources where his position is discussed at length. The references to Arak'el are marked by chapter because his chapters are very short. This also facilitates reference for readers not familiar with the Armenian language who can refer to the Russian or French editions.

²⁸There are no numbers, be they approximate, for this period.

²⁹There is a more complete analysis of Arak'el's possible bias in the last chapter of this study which analyses problems inherent to the sources.

³⁰References to the initiative of the Armenian Church can be found in Arak'el Davrizhec'i and also in Ormanian's *Azgapatum* (Constantinople: 1914), pp. 2291-93.

a great role in making 'Abbas aware of the usefulness of transferring into his realm the Armenian artisan and merchant classes who were now under Ottoman rule.

The Armenian Katholikosate initiated contact with the Safavid ruler shortly after the treaty of 1590 with the Ottomans had been signed. The Armenian Church was secure in its conviction that the Shah was both interested in regaining lost territory, and competing with Ottoman commerce. A mission was sent to Isphahan, and the Shah agreed readily to accept and protect any Armenians escaping Ottoman rule. He took several Armenians into his own service.³¹ This episode is related at length by Arak'el, who stresses that the Armenian Katholikosate was heavily indebted to the Ottomans, and that the two Katholikoi, David and Melik'seth were hoping to evade payment by encouraging the Persian king to reconquer Armenia. He refers to them as traitors to their own nation who informed the Shah and showed him the best way to Armenia. He contends that their action led to the destruction and bondage of their people.³²

Shah 'Abbas had many problems to face at the beginning of his reign. He had inherited all the damage done under two weak rulers. He first restored internal order and established a strong base of power among the Qizilbash amirs who had brought him to the throne. He then proceeded to reconquer territories lost to the enemy. He first recovered Khurasan from the Uzbeks. He transferred the capital of the kingdom from Qazvin, situated too far north and too close to the Ottoman border, to Isphahan in 1597/98. Under the guise of a hunting trip to Mazandaran, he marched on Tabriz. He was greeted by the population who had suffered terribly under twenty years of Ottoman occupation. The same reception awaited him in some areas of the Caucasus

³¹Vartan Gregorian p. 661.

³²Arak'el, chapter III.

which were in the same desolate situation.³³ From Tabriz the King marched on to Naxčevan, which he conquered without difficulty. This caused the Ottomans to retreat to Erevan, behind the strong fortifications of three separate forts which protected the city. Strategically Erevan was the strongest defensive position in the region. The Safavids faced the harsh Caucasian winter. Fighting was out of question, for no trenches could be dug in the frozen ground. The siege lasted from the fall of 1603 through June 1604, when the Ottomans surrendered. From there on the Iranian troops overran Qarabagh, and entered Eastern Anatolia where they devastated Kars and Erzerum. From Eastern Anatolia alone 2000-3000 Armenian families were transferred to Iran.³⁴

Next, the Ottoman forces concentrated in Van. The Safavid troops were led by two Ghulam commanders, Allahverdi Khan, a Gergian by origin, and Qarchqay Beg of Armenian origin. They launched limited attacks which the Ottomans misinterpreted as weakness, and led to Ottoman counter attack which resulted in a Safavid Victory. The last decisive battle was won at Sefyan near Tabriz in 1607. Qarchqay Beg's career attests to the integration of the Armenians into the high ranks of Safavid society before Shah 'Abbas had adopted any of his official policies toward the Armenians. It should be noted, however, that they were converts to Islam. At this time their Muslim faith was a condition *sine qua non* for their integration. Qarchqay Beg succeeded Allahverdi Khan as commander in chief of the Safavid army in 1613. The first order he had to obey as commander in chief was to lead his army to Armenia and devastate the whole region of Erevan-Van.³⁵

³³R. Savory, p.86.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 87.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 88.

Armenian families were deported as a matter of policy from all the cities and villages the Safavids conquered. Among these was the prosperous village of Julfa. The inhabitants of Julfa were not deported with the main wave of deportations but a short time later in the same year.³⁶ The deportation of the inhabitants of Julfa, their settlement in a new and entirely Armenian suburb of Isphahan named New Julfa has eclipsed the larger scope of the Armenian deportations and the harsh reality of the conditions they faced. New Julfa was not exclusively settled with the inhabitants of Julfa. Several neighborhoods existed within it, each bearing the names of the original birthplaces of its inhabitants, such as Erevan or Tabriz. Many Armenians, mainly from Erevan and Dašt were settled in the center of the city of Isphahan. All the population of Armenia, be they Christian, Jewish or Moslem, were ordered to move out of their lands and settle in Persia³⁷ Furthermore, the relatively milder circumstances of the deportations from the village of Julfa were an exception and not the rule.

The inhabitants of the village of old Julfa in Armenia received the Persian Shah with much celebration. He was greeted with elaborate ceremony and feasting, with food and wine “fit for a King”. He was handed the keys to the city. In his honor the clergy and notables of Julfa went on a procession punctuated by incense, candles and songs. The Shah remained three whole days in Julfa, lodged in the house of a wealthy merchant by the name of Khoja Xačig, who offered him trays full of gold coins.³⁸

³⁶This is clear from Arak'el's description of the deportations which we will refer to in the next paragraphs. Arak'el, Chapter V.

³⁷Arak'el, Chapter III, IV.andV.

³⁸Arak'el, Chapter V, and Ter Yovhancanc', Volume I, p. 19.

This famous passage from the pen of Arak'el Davrizhec'i speaks of wine served in gold cups, of notables dressed in fine clothing, and of the Persian Shah pausing three days in the midst of a war. Given the circumstances, it is immediately apparent that Julfa's prosperity was unusual and the Shah's behavior exceptional. If the Shah behaved exceptionally, the merchants of Julfa did not. They had often resorted to sizeable gifts in the past to preserve the prosperity of their village. Indeed after all the devastation in the region, it is unusual to find such a prosperous merchant town continuing to commerce against all odds. Depicting the constant threat of deportation as slaves by both the Ottomans and the Persians, a traveller describes their customs about twenty years before Shah 'Abbas' visit:

This town was much endangered in the warres betwixt Amurat the great Turke, and Mahomet Codibanda, the Persian King, ready to be swallowed up of both....To avoid which danger, these poor Chulfalini were glad to present the Persian Prince with greater and more liberal gifts, then they did their enemy Bassae[the Ottoman governor of Erevan? *Bassae of Reivan*, undoubtedly described as Turkish in the text.]. Thus these miserable people in the midst of armes and squadrons of the enemy, were constrained, what with presents, what with lies, notably to preserve their liberties, and their lives in safety.³⁹

Julfa's wealth was due to its emergence as a main commercial center under Persian and Ottoman rule. It was located at the crossing of several trade routes which made it a center of East-West trade. By no means did the two thousand houses⁴⁰ of Julfa all belong to merchants. There were many skilled artisans, but virtually no

³⁹Cartwright, John *The Preachers Travels....to the East Indies, through...Syria, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Media, Hircania and Parthia...* London, 1611. p.36

⁴⁰Ter Stepanos wrote of 20,000 houses in Julfa, referring to the original village. However, given that he began writing in the year 1114 of the Armenian era, which was only a short time after the deportations, Yovhancanc' argues on the basis of this date that he must be referring to New Julfa. This number of 12,000 is cited by Vartan Gregorian, but I was unable to find it elsewhere, and was unable to find a primary source citing an exact number. The number cited by the traveller Cartwright a little further in the text is of 2000 houses, but then his calculation of 10,000 makes it an average of 5 per household, which seems a little low for the time. Families were usually extended and included several servants in the case of the wealthy. Many years later Chardin visiting the ruins of Julfa affirms he counts about 2000 houses in the ruins despite the fact that the Armenians had told him of 4000.

peasants.⁴¹ The merchants of Julfa were unusually prosperous, and had many contacts with the West. The situation of Julfa and its wealth is well described by Cartwright:

...and so we arrived at Chiufal [old Julfa], a town situated in the frontiers between the Armenians and the Atropatians, and yet within Armenia, inhabited by Christians partly Armenians, partly Georgians: a people rather given to the traffique of Silkes, and other sorts of wares, wherby it waxeth rich and full of money, then instructed in weapons and matters of warres. This town consisteth of two thousand houses and ten thousand soules, being built at the foot of a great rocky mountaine so barren in soile, that they are constrained to fetch most of their provisions...⁴²

In 1604 Shah 'Abbas ordered the deportation of the entire population of Julfa. They were given special attention because the Shah did not want the merchants to lose the ready capital and the skill they were bringing into his realm. They were given three days to leave their homes and cross the river Araxes. The Persian troops were ordered by the Shah in person, present on the scene, to assist them. Despite the extraordinary measures taken, this deportation caused much suffering, both physical and psychological. To make this move a final one the whole village was immediately burnt.⁴³ The crossing of the river Araxe was made even more difficult because of a sudden outbreak of heavy rains.⁴⁴ Half a century after the deportation of the whole population Jean Chardin visited the ruins of Julfa:

The town used to have four thousand houses according to the Armenians, however judging by the ruins there could have only been half of that. Most seem to be holes and caverns carved in the mountain more suitable to sheltering cattle than to lodging men. I think there is no place more hideous

⁴¹ See note 37, in this same passage Cartwright affirms that the inhabitants of Julfa were dependant for their provisions on other villages, however, they did make wine.

⁴² John Cartwright, *The Preachers Travels....to the East Indies, through...Syria, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Media, Hircania and Parthia...* (London: 1611), p. 35.

⁴³ Arak'el, chapter V.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

and sterile than the site of old Julfa. there are no trees or grass to be seen....At present there are about thirty families that are all Armenian.⁴⁵

The deportations of 1603-29 were of a very large scale:

The exact number of Armenians taken to Persia during the wars of Shah Abbas is not clear. Arakel Davrizhetsi estimated the number at 60 000 families or 300 000 souls, removed not on one, two, or three, but on many occasions....Antonio de Govea, the Spanish Ambassador to the court of Shah Abbas, and Iskandar Munshi provide many details about the misery and suffering that were the natural accompaniment to these massive dislocations. The ravages of the extremely cold winter of 1604 and the terrible toll taken by starvation, producing some instances of cannibalism, were reported by Antonio de Govea. Many unable or too weak to swim the Araxes, were driven into it and drowned. Others died in epidemics.⁴⁶

New Julfa was to become well known thanks to the wealth and skill of its merchants. The next chapter will be entirely devoted to its foundation, administration and evolution. Other Armenians were dispersed throughout Persia: namely Tabriz, Qazvin, and many locations in Gilan, as well as Enzeli, Darband and Kashan. Many Armenian peasants were settled in the newly reconquered Gilan, where they devoted themselves to the production of silk.⁴⁷

The Policies of Shah Abbas

It is said of Shah Abbas that he knew well that a people transplanted by force would have no enthusiasm for their new homeland. So, to win their loyalty he behaved with infinite kindness.⁴⁸ The primary source for the benevolent policies of

⁴⁵Jean Chardin, *Voyage de Paris à Isphahn*. (Paris: 1983) Vol. II: *De Tiflis à Isphahan*, p. 99.

⁴⁶Vartan Gregorian, p. 664.

⁴⁷'Ter Yovhancane', vol. I, p. 35.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 53.

the Shah towards the Armenians is Arak'el of Tabriz.⁴⁹ The following passage of the historian's work on the freedom of the Armenian Christians is well known and has been often quoted out of context. On its own it has forged an image that is rather misleading:

Shah Abbas personally adopted a loving behavior towards the Armenians and their notables, especially towards the people of Julfa, whose leaders were Khoja Safar and his brother Khoja Nazar and their sons Melika and Sultanum. Shah Abbas personally visited their houses and ate and drank with them and in turn invited them to his household and his table and honored them with many signs of respect, he also required that his lords (naxarar) act in the same fashion.⁵⁰

He goes on to stress that he collected very few royal taxes from the Christians and collected them as the Christians wished. If there was a dispute large or slight between a Christian and a Muslim, his courts always took the word of the Christian over that of the Moslem. To accommodate the Armenians he dislodged many Moslems from their homes. He ordered that Churches should be built and he assisted personally to important Armenian religious feast days; public processions were allowed where no Moslem would dare an insult.⁵¹ Read more completely, Arak'el himself gives a host of details that contradict some of these assertions. As for his personal opinion it is quite clear:

Now, that this Prince is lauded for being the friend of the Christians, a pacific philanthropist: this how he loved the Christians, by desolating the Christian lands of Georgia and Armenia, by exterminating its population by violence, famine and slavery, by taking its debris to Isphahan and Pharahabad where they succumbed in a thousand manners! If one were tempted to praise him, before starting his elegy, one should examine his behavior toward the Christians.⁵²

⁴⁹Arak'el Davrizhec'i, Chapter VII.

⁵⁰Arak'el, Chapter V.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

⁵²Arak'el, Chapter XI.

Ter Yovhancanc' stresses this newly found religious freedom under Shah Abbas and attempts to offer further proof by quoting the inscriptions on several tombstones that have been inscribed with the term "*azat*" meaning free.⁵³ He stresses that the term was used on the tombstones of the notables of New Julfa to indicate that they were free citizens and not slaves.⁵⁴ This detail alone would inspire a critical mind to think that freedom, if it had to be carved on stone, was not everybody's prerogative. Certain less idyllic episodes of the life of the Armenians under the reign of Shah Abbas have been recorded by Raphaël du Mans,⁵⁵ and Arak'el has described those events at length.⁵⁶

The group of Armenians concerned here is not the Armenians of Julfa. Arak'el, after enumerating seven to eight groups who were forced to leave Azebayjan for Isphahan, refers to two separate groups of Armenians who had been settled in the center of Isphahan: one had as chief a man named Mourad, and the other a chief named Yosiph. The King appointed a leader to each group; the leader being then

⁵³ *Azat* might otherwise be understood as meaning noble, or of noble origin. See Anahid Perikhanian.

⁵⁴ H. Ter Yovhancanc', Vol. I, p. 55.

⁵⁵ "Touchant donc a l'avance que Chabbas fit aux Arméniens en leur redemandant son capital que après plusieurs années, leur donnant l'intérêt, ceux de Julfa comme nous l'avons dit, firent profiter leur talent; ceux de Scrabana qui sont de vrais *toulongi*. (gens de néant), mangèrent le bien du roy, et lorsque le terme fut venu, et l'on pressa de payer, ils furent bien empeschés. Les Augustins Portugois, en ce temps de leurs conquestes et trafic dans les Indes florissoient, avoient de grandes aumosnes `a faire; ils jugèrent icelles bien employées si l'on aquittoient les chrétiens, à la charge pour eux de faire profession de la foi apostolique et romaine, ce qu'ils firent facilement. Chabbas, contre son espérance se voyant païé en belle monnoye, leur demanda qui leur avoient donné l'argent: ayant entendu le procédé, il dit que si pour de l'argent on changeoit de religion, il vouloit que l'on prist la sienne, son argent estant aussi bon que celui des Francs. Ce faict, il contraignit la plupart à se faire Mores, et les fit tailler(*sonnet*). Depuis la plupart sont retournés `a l'église, et depuis ce temps là, il n'ont faict que vivoter, partie `a vendre du vin, partie `a d'autre telles coionnories* qui les ont tousiours *tenus en la basesse, jusques `a ce dernier coup on les a ecartés de la ville qui estoit le principal entretien de ces misérables; s'ils sont traités de la sorte ils ne le méritent que trop. Raphaël du Mans pp. 185-86. in the only published version, in Publications de L'Ecole des Langues Orientales Vivantes, série 2, volume 20, Paris 1890. * The spelling of the time has been retained through the quotation. The word "tousiours" is spelled "toujours" today, but other words such as "coionnorie" are even more farfetched in their orthography. "Coionnerie" actually is the word "cochonnerie."

⁵⁶ Arak'el, chapters XII and XIV.

responsible for the group. These Armenians were extremely poor upon their arrival to Isphahan, and given that life in the city was quite expensive, the little they had they had spent or sold very quickly. Informed of their indigence by the Persian officers who were their guards,⁵⁷ the shah lent their leaders 400 toumans, with no interest, for the period of three years. The condition attached to the restitution of the money was the following: if the sum was not returned the Armenians concerned would have to convert to Islam and sell their children into slavery at the price of 4 toumans for a boy and three toumans for a girl.⁵⁸

Five years later the money had not been restituted. When the Shah demanded his money, the community was as indigent as before, and was unable to produce the required sum. There happened to be a Portuguese bishop⁵⁹ visiting Isphahan. Upon learning of the circumstances of the Armenians, he lent them a large part of the money. The Armenians went to the Shah, who having learned of the loan accused them of having espoused Catholicism for money. He subjected them to torture until they converted to Islam.⁶⁰

Forced conversions were not an isolated incident. Another massive wave of forced circumcision, and conversions took place in 1619. Religious freedom was therefore relative. If one found oneself in the wrong place at the wrong time,⁶¹ or was indebted

⁵⁷Their chief duty was to make sure the Armenians did not run away in order to return to their villages.

⁵⁸Arak'el, chapter XIII.

⁵⁹It is clear from Raphaël du Mans account that the bishop was Portuguese, Carswell mistakenly refers to the bishop as French. See note 49 above.

⁶⁰According to Raphaël du Mans, they had easily converted to Catholicism, but resisted Islam.

⁶¹There is the story of a priest who happened to be on the king's way. The king ordered him to become moslem, the priest refused the king killed him with a hatchet. The latter incident opens terrible persecutions and forced conversion and circumcision in Peria. The provocation for this furor was the king's displeasure at the answer of an Armenian woman who was to sell him a hen. He was in disguise and asked for a cheap price for the love of the king. She replied: "what has he done for us for me to give you my hen at a cheap price." All this is in Arak'el, chapter XIV.

as in the case above, conversion and circumcision were an immediate peril. In addition to this, many Armenian families suffered vexation from their own children or relatives who had converted, and who by law were entitled to receive the material goods possessed by their families.⁶²

Arak'el provides the following anecdote as showing the true nature of Shah Abbas' policies: The religious authorities and the important religious figures of the time were very unhappy with Shah Abbas' new permissiveness towards the Christians and reproached him for his policies. He answered: "do not become bitter at the sight of the feigned friendship I am offering them; do not blame me if I have taken great pains to bring them to Isphahan: it is not for their interest but mine, so that my country will profit and my people progress. If we force them to convert and destroy their unity, they will form groups and flee and none of them will become Muslim. By being lenient as I am, I am tying them to my country; those born in Armenia will die and their children born here will turn to Islam of their own will."⁶³ It is difficult to confirm the veracity of this quotation attributed to the Shah, as Arak'el wrote one-half century after the deportations. Some of his account is based on interviews with inhabitants of New Julfa. This comment might speak better for their impression of the Shah's intentions than for Safavid state policy.

These facts have often been neglected and the reign of Shah Abbas often portrayed as very beneficial to all of the Armenians. There is no doubt that it was to a few, mainly to some wealthy merchants of New Julfa who were of service to him, and who will be discussed at length later. The Armenian Church also suffered tremendously under the reign of Shah Abbas. Arak'el recounts the circumstances of

⁶²Arak'el, chapter V.

⁶³*Ibid.* Arak'el wrote in 1650 at the earliest. He was not a witness to the deportations or to the policies of Shah Abbas. He has gathered information by travelling and interviewing witnesses to the events.

instituting a heavy tax of 100 toumans on Ējmiacin. This stemmed from competition between two Katholikoi. One, Melikseth, promised to pay 100 toumans a year to the Shah, and therefore became Katholikos of all the Armenians by the Shah's order, to the detriment of his competitor David.⁶⁴ The Shah attached four royal slaves to the Katholikos, who, followed by them, went among the Armenian community of Isphahan and other cities collecting for the church. The upkeep of the Katholikos, and especially of the four royal slaves, plus the required tax, made the head of the Armenian church quite an unwelcome burden.⁶⁵ The money used to cover this expense was lent to the poorer Armenians by the wealthier merchants.

Because of the impending deadline of the treasury, and also to satisfy the Qullis, the Catholicos went to visit the Armenians with the Qullis incessantly attached to his heels. The demands of the Qullis for themselves and their horses aggravated the problems of the community. Their table was never without wine, and their expenses were high. They drank ceaselessly.

In his tours through the different communities the Katholikos often found enough resources for himself, but not enough for the Qullis or the tax; consequently he arrested many innocents, bishops, monks, priests or lay people who had committed no crime or had no debt. Under all kinds of unjust reasons he required money of them, delivered them to the soldiers of the royal slaves who hung them by their feet, beat them and only let them go after the sum was somehow paid.⁶⁶

In order to make Isphahan the center of the Armenian church, Shah Abbas decided to destroy Ējmiacin and transport it stone by stone to New Julfa. Difficulties with his Georgian campaigns prevented him from going through with this project. Nevertheless he gave orders in 1613 for three stones to be removed and sent to Isphahan. They reached Isphahan in 1614. He also had the right arm of Gregory the

⁶⁴Arak'el, chapter XVIII.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

Illuminator transferred to his capital.⁶⁷ He helped the community to get back some relics stolen by Portuguese Catholic priests, and they were installed in the house of Khoja Šafraz, the most important merchant of Julfa. It is interesting that despite the existence of many churches within New Julfa the relics remained in this house. Arak'el visited the relics there in 1657.⁶⁸

Although he himself witnessed the exceptional prosperity of the merchants of New Julfa, Arak'el always refers to Shah Abbas as “destroyer of the world”, “infernal dragon”, “snake” and one “inhabited by the devil.”⁶⁹ The Shah's policies toward the merchants seem to have been different. They seem to have been treated with exceptional regard as well as with a tolerance that the Shah did not extend to the rest of the Armenian people. He was following the dictates of a clear policy. Chief among these was cultivating the good will of the hard-working, prosperous Armenian merchants, as well as of the well-integrated converts that had been there since the reign of Shah Tahmasp and who constituted a significant part of his army. He extended certain privileges to them for economic, as well as political, reasons.

Shah Abbas, brought to power by a Qizilbash coup, did not want the amirs to be the sole foundation of his power. He clearly knew of the danger of having his rule becoming conditional to their continued support. In deporting the population of the Caucasus and granting them several unprecedented privileges he assured himself a new base of supporters, whose position was dependant on loyalty alone.:

The failure of the second attempt [to prevent the Turcoman element from assuming a dominant position] led Shah Tahmasp to introduce as a "third force" elements that were neither Turcoman-Qizilbash nor Tajik-Iranian: these Caucasian Christian elements, ...were a major factor in the

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

⁶⁸Arak'el, chap. 16.

⁶⁹Numerous instances of this name-calling occurs, some examples are found in chapters IV, V, IX, XVII, etc.

administrative reorganization of the state, and in the concomitant social revolution brought about by Shah Abbas I. In the new social order loyalty and obedience to the shah and not membership in the Qizilbash elite, were to be the sole criteria of advancement.⁷⁰

Their role as the exporters of silk outside Iran was not a royal privilege granted to them on a silver platter. The Armenian merchants outbid the English in 1619.

Through the high price they paid the Shah for his recently monopolised silk, as well as the customs they were willing to pay for exporting it, they literally paid for the privilege. The Shah extended them no credit or special privileges.⁷¹ It is important to stress this, as the true nature of this arrangement has remained largely misunderstood. More often than not, it is casually stated that these privileges were “given” to the Armenian merchants.⁷²

The Armenians under the Reign of Shah Safi (1629-42)

Shah Safi continued his grandfather's policies toward the Armenians. There were several notables in his court, who had been there under Shah Abbas and who reminded him of “the good dispositions” of the Armenians towards the late Shah and of the Shah's policies towards them.⁷³

There was however some amelioration of the circumstances under which the Armenians lived. There is no recorded evidence of forced conversions during his reign. Even more significant, Shah Safi, at the request of the Armenians, cancelled the tax of a hundred toumans imposed on Ējmiacin:

⁷⁰R. Savory, p. 91.

⁷¹Della Valle, *Persia*, vol. II, chap.2, pp. 63-67.

⁷²See a more ample discussion of this in the chapter on the international role of the Armenians in this dissertation.

⁷³Arak'el, chapter 6.

The entire nation of the Armenians, Occidental or Oriental, was sighing trembling and moaning under the annuity of 100 toumans. The Katholikos thanks to the mediation of Khoja Nazar but not without great expense and great fatigue, managed to cancel that crushing burden that loomed over the Katholikosate. On an order from Shah Safi a rescript was accorded which cancelled the annuity of a 100 toumans.⁷⁴

It cost the Armenian community 1000 toumans to have the tax of 100 cancelled.⁷⁵ This money was mostly obtained from wealthy merchants. The community ceased to be plagued by the visits of a Katholikos, followed by his four royal slaves and their soldiers. Moses, a candidate much supported by the New Julfa Armenians, was appointed Katholikos by Shah Safi. It is important to note that it was the Safavid rulers of Armenia who officially appointed the Armenian Katholikos.⁷⁶

Shah Safi's reign was also a time of reconstruction in historic Armenia. After a new period of devastation due to the wars of Sultan Murad and Shah Safi in 1634-35, the new Armenian Katholikos Philippos⁷⁷ collected money and funded the reconstruction of Ejmiacin and many other important churches. There are no recorded deportations from the Caucasus during the reign of Shah Safi.

⁷⁴Arak'el, chapter 20.

⁷⁵Arak'el, chapter 25.

⁷⁶See information in Arakel in chapters 17,18,20, 25. In many passages he describes how the Katholikos, if not chosen by the King, was subject to his approval for official appointment. He clearly states that the kings appointed Melikseth, Moses and Philippos respectively.

⁷⁷It is Philippos who ordered Arak'el to write his history. He was catholicos from 1633 to 1655, and was the instigator of many of the reconstructions. Ejmiacin was to have a bell tower again thanks to funding from a rich merchant of Constantinople. Among the many improvements he brought was a new reform of the church in 13 canons drafted at Jerusalem. The Armenian church had been badly disorganized, with corruption determining most of its hierarchy. See Arak'el, Chapter 25.

The Armenians under the reign of Shah Abbas II (1642-66)

By contrast, Shah Abbas the Second's reign was not one of tolerance. This wine-loving Shah, well known to the Europeans because of Tavernier's accounts of his long nights at court sharing wine with the monarch, banned wine making in Isphahan. He also forbade the drinking of wine by his subjects. With the force of this decree, he ordered the Armenians dislodged from the center of Isphahan. It is well known that wine and stronger spirits were made by the Armenians and by some Jews. The decree accused them of polluting the waters when making wine, as well as polluting the street waters with washing jugs having previously contained wine.⁷⁸

Some members of the Armenian community obeyed, others more savage and intractable rebelled and started shouting, making noise and creating hostility which ended at their detriment. Having assembled on the passage of the Monarch, as they saw him approach they cried out their distress; an action the King found displeasing. To his anger was added that of the Moslems who witnessing the hostile emotion of the Prince became like enraged lions and started using violence to eject them.⁷⁹

The Armenians settled in the center of Isphahan had lived there since the reign of Shah Abbas I. They were from many locations in Azerbaijan, as well as from Erevan, Dast, Van, Xoi, Salmast, Macou and many other localities. They were not among the wealthy, many of them lived by making or selling wine. Others were employed at menial tasks, barely scraping a living.⁸⁰ Despite some of the brutality employed in dislodging them, and the loss caused by the move itself, the Armenians still were treated much better than the Zoroastrians and the Jews. They were settled

⁷⁸Arak'el, chapter 33.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

⁸⁰*Ibid.*

south of New Julfa, and distributed land. At this same time the Jews were persecuted in the most humiliating ways and forced to convert to Islam.⁸¹

The above order concerned all non-Moslems. It compelled them to leave the center of town and resettle in the outskirts of Isphahan. Arak'el gives overcrowding and rivalry for housing as the cause for conflict among the population. He explains that the Shah's order had been inspired by the reports from his entourage that there was pervasive hostility against non-Moslems. The Shah had been convinced that much of the disorder in the city was due to drunkenness. He was further convinced that a simple ban on drinking would not suffice, even though those who transgressed that particular law had their noses and ears cut off. Arak'el reports that the move to the outskirts began with the community from Dasht in 1655, and that by the time he visited Isphahan in 1657 there was not a single Armenian left in the city of Isphahan.⁸²

Arak'el's commentary on the displacement of the Armenian population is interesting, because he believed that it ultimately was the best thing that could have happened, for it reduced the rate of conversions to Islam:

Continuous exposure to the brutal and sensual mores of the Mahometans and their predications turned them away from the principles of Christianity until they ended up renouncing it completely and embracing Islam. Then young Christians were pleasing to Mahometan girls, and young Mahometans courted Christian girls and tied to mate secretly with the sons and daughters of the Christians, this so effectively that they eventually brought them to convert willingly or reluctantly.. We have seen a good number of them pass into Moslem families. When the Christians tried to bring them back they refused to comply....Massed together in the same place they bless God with joy...⁸³

Once again the royal decree did not concern the wealthier merchants of New Julfa, already settled outside the center of town. Drinking was not banned in New

⁸¹Arak'el, Chapter 34.

⁸²Arak'el, Chapter 33.

⁸³Arak'el, Chapter 33.

Julfa, nor were any of its inhabitants disturbed. The Shah had given special personal dispensations, permitting some of his intimates, important people and foreigners to drink wine. It seems that New Julfa's inhabitants also had this privilege.⁸⁴

The Armenians under the reign of Shah Sulayman (Safi II 1666-94)

Under the reign of Shah Sulayman, also named Shah Safi II, the Armenian community was suddenly burdened by extremely heavy taxation. This time New Julfa was no exception. By a royal *farmān* of 1671 all Armenian churches were taxed according to their importance, for a total of 424 toumans a year. The churches of New Julfa, P'ërya and Buṛvaṛ are enumerated in the *farmān*. It is interesting to note that under Shah Suleiman's reign there were a total of 71 Armenian churches in these three suburbs of Isphahan, all of which are listed in the *farmān*. What is generally known as New Julfa comprised two different neighborhoods: "Old Julfa", the neighborhood first settled by Shah Abbas I; and "New Julfa", the neighborhood settled after the displacements of Shah Abbas II. The newer settlement is situated immediately South of the older one. These two groups of inhabitants, with a total of 20 churches, were responsible for 313 toumans of the total of the 424 touman taxation.⁸⁵

⁸⁴Shah Abbas II is amply described by Jean Baptiste Tavernier. Special edicts permitting the consumption of wine were granted both by Shah Abbas II and by his successor Shah Suleiman. Both Tavernier and later Chardin describe this custom.

⁸⁵Ter Yohancanc', volume II, pp.260-263. There is a complete translation of this *farmān* installing a new taxation policy. There follows a complete enumeration of all the Armenian churches and what they each owe is listed individually next to each of them. This is a very interesting document. Not only does it provide a complete list of the churches, but gives a good estimation of their importance. The highest tax was owed by the Church of All Saviour: 50 toumans. For more detail see Appendix A.

A confirmation of this new taxation being effectively applied is found in Jean Chardin, writing about events on March 15th in the year 1673, he describes an attempt to have the taxes cancelled:

This same day, the clergy of Julfa, this large suburb of Isphahan, the abode of all the Armenian Christians, which is on the South side of the river, went with their patriarch preceding them to present a request to the prime minister to discharge them of the taxation imposed on the churches of Julfa. They had hoped that he would answer them favorably but they were mistaken. He told them that they either had to pay the tax or destroy their churches. The tax is of 6000 écus per year for ten churches. The Grand Vizir who is now in function imposed them two years ago.⁸⁶

According to Step'anos Erec' and to a colophon found by Ter Yovhancanc' this taxation was brought about by the revenge of a disgruntled Armenian ecclesiastic. His ambitions having been thwarted by his own church, the Armenian priest, by the name of Yohan, converted to Islam. He managed to convey to the Shah the idea that the Armenian churches were very rich in gold and silver and that it would be profitable to tax them.⁸⁷

Jean Chardin relates a similar, but far more important, occurrence of voluntary conversion in 1673:

The 24 was a day of affliction for all the Christians of Isphahan and especially the Armenians because of the revolt of their chief or governor named Agha Piri Calentar; that is to say provost of this big suburb of Isphahan where they live. He was a semi-scholar who had read Avicenna and other Arab philosophers as well as Moslem polemicists and could not solve their objections; therefore he was more seduced by the blindness of a spirit of error than by mere voluptuousness.⁸⁸

He knew that his voluntary conversion would create unprecedented problems and much aversion among the Armenians as he was the most prominent member of their

⁸⁶ Jean Chardin *Voyage de Paris à Isphahan*. Volume II, *De Tiflis à Isphahan*, p. 218 (in the Maspero edition). The sum mentioned here does not correspond to anything clearly stated in the *farmān*.

⁸⁷ Ter Yovhancanc', volume II, pp. 258-59.

⁸⁸ Jean Chardin, *Voyage de Paris à Isphahan*. Volume II, *De Tiflis à Isphahan*, p. 232 (in the Maspero edition).

community. Two weeks before his formal apostasy he went to court and begged the Nazir to make it seem like an act committed under violence. To convince the Nazir to help him he not only presented him with 600 ducats but predicted that if his conversion were to be known as a voluntary apostasy, the Armenian merchants who were abroad on business would seize the opportunity not to come back. They would keep their goods and money and settle in Europe and this would cause a great loss.⁸⁹ And so it was done: the Nazir approached him and said very loudly, “the Shah orders you to become Moslem, he must be contented.”⁹⁰

Had his apostasy been an isolated incident, it still would be worthy of mention. Agha Piri, given the name Mohammad Piri after conversion, was not only the *Kalantar*⁹¹ of Julfa but one of the richest merchants in the country. Chardin writes that he owned a fortune greater than 2,000,000 pounds, and that the Moslems considered his conversion a great victory.⁹² The conversion of the *Kalantar* will be discussed in depth elsewhere because it is linked with the French Capuchins attempts to convert the Armenians to Catholicism. His apostasy did not remain an isolated incident it had consequences for the whole community. The Patriarch and the entire community feared that they would be subjected to some violence after this conversion. Their anxiety was caused by the belief that their *Kalantar* had been converted by force. Though no violence occurred, they were put under significant pressure to convert *en masse*. The dialogue that is transmitted to us by Chardin

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

⁹⁰*Ibid.*

⁹¹The function and office of the *Kalantar* are clarified in chapter 4 in the section on the administration of Julfa.

⁹²Chardin, *Maspéro edition*, p. 233.

between the Prime Minister and the Armenian Patriarch who had been ordered to appear before him is a revealing one:

The Prime Minister sent for them and told them that "the King had a great zeal for their conversion, and as for himself, it would be the greatest joy of life and his ministry if they were to embrace the true religion." They answered trembling that "His Majesty had a world of Moslem slaves and that he could through His Goodness let the lowest of all his slaves live in the religion of the Prophet Jesus, and leave them their churches where they did nothing more often than pray for the life of His Majesty and his ministers." They also let it be understood that if they converted, their couriers who were in Europe would not come back, and that this would cause the State the loss of immense wealth.⁹³

It seems that the argument that not only their merchants would not come back, but that the Christian Princes of Europe would not let them commerce in their dominions if they were Moslem, won the approval of the court. They were submitted to no further pressure. This incident also had other repercussions. It led to a direct correspondence from the Patriarch to the Pope at the urging of the French Capuchins. The temptation of Catholicism will be discussed elsewhere when their relations with France are explored. What is clear is that their wealth, their strategic and commercial importance, had once again saved them from conversion to Islam

One further incident related by the same traveller makes it very clear that no matter how important they might have been for international commerce or foreign relations they ultimately remained subject to the absolute will of the Persian monarch. The Shah's mother had a very large diamond of which she had tired, and she sought to have it sold. The fifty-three carat diamond was offered to Chardin himself, but on the same day the *Kalantar* of the Armenians had come on a visit to accompany a French envoy of the East India Company. The *Nazir* told him that the Shah had ordered him to buy the diamond and pay for it immediately in cash. Chardin relates that a little later the Armenians sold the diamond to him at a much lower price than

⁹³*Ibid.*, pp. 234-5.

they were made to pay, and that they had to absorb the loss.⁹⁴ It seems evident that the position of intermediary was far from always being an advantage when under the absolute power of one of the parties.

At this time the financial condition of the Armenians was very distressed because the total amount of the taxes due amounted to 800 toumans a year, once the tax due directly to the Shah was added to the Church tax. In addition to paying the tax, much money was spent attempting to have the decree of 1671 cancelled. Lavish presents to important officials and several delegations bearing gifts remained unsuccessful. The tax remained in force. The reign of Shah Sulayman was a time of religious tension and financial strain for his Armenian subjects, but, as will be demonstrated later, the Armenian merchants continued to play an important role despite the circumstances.⁹⁵

The Armenians under the Reign of Shah Sultan Husayn (1694-1722)

Attempts to have the taxation decree cancelled continued. In the second year of his reign Shah Sultan Husayn issued a *firman* exempting the churches of "Old Julfa"⁹⁶ from the tax. The document states that his father had made this exemption before him. However, there is no further proof of the exemption having been granted by Shah Sulayman. This decree as well as three other decrees following it⁹⁷ seem to have had no effect. Although the *firman*s clearly state "do not collect tax from them", "do not bother them about this matter," there is ample proof in the church records

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 283.

⁹⁵Ter Yovhancanc', Volume II, p. 263.

⁹⁶The 1671 *farmān* lists 14 churches in this district, the one settled by Shah Abbas the first. The *farmān* of 1695 refers only to Old Julfa being exempt, that is to 14 of the 71 Armenian churches. No churches are listed and only Old Julfa is mentioned.

⁹⁷Ter Yovhancanc's translation for these four decrees are reproduced in their entirety in Appendix B.

studied by Ter Yovhancanc' that the churches not only had to continue paying, but were impoverished in the process. In 1720 silver ornaments were removed from many churches to pay for a taxation from which the churches were officially exempt.⁹⁸ As the exemptions were probably obtained through demands customarily accompanied by great sums of money, it is interesting to note that the churches of the neighborhood inhabited by the rich merchants of "Old Julfa" were officially exempt fourteen years before the others. It seems the Armenians paid for the exemption only to find themselves taxed again.

Another firman, from 1709, extends the exemption to all of the Armenian churches taxed in 1671. More information, beyond the exemption itself, is found in this document. It is stated there that the exemption is necessary because the inclement times caused by the taxation have led many Armenians to leave and settle elsewhere. The firman clearly states that from that date on taxes will be limited to those imposed by Shah Abbas I (royal tax) so that the Armenians could remain in peace and pray for the eternal reign of the ruler. Three years later, the firman of 1712 itself not only reiterates the exemption but verifies the fact that the taxation had been enforced. It spells out that this should cease, and that the treasury should remove the sum of the taxes from its dues.⁹⁹

It is well known that at the end of the reign of Shah Sultan Husayn, when the Afghans invaded the Safavid territories, many Armenians fled Iran for India, Russia and Europe. This phenomenon had started much earlier however, since their situation had become financially precarious under the last two Safavid rulers. If New Julfa remained a commercial center, it was a declining one. Many of the merchants who travelled abroad remained abroad, trading between Russia and Europe, or Europe and

⁹⁸Ter Yovhancanc' Volume II, pp.267-68.

⁹⁹See Appendix B.

India. Even the very rich, who often had remained in Iran contracting lesser merchants to do their travelling, began moving to India, Venice or Moscow.

General Conclusions about the Role of the Armenians

It is now clear that the deportations of the populations of the Caucasus by the Safavids spanned the course of a century (approximately 1530-1630). Armenians had settled in Iran before Safavid times, notably under the Seljuks and the Mongols. They had, however, exclusively settled in Northern Iran with their center at Tabriz. There are no numbers available to gauge the size of the community under Safavid rule, but it was the first time, however, that a sizeable number of Armenians were forced to settle throughout Iran. The deportations had a dual purpose: they were an element in the military strategy against Ottoman incursions into the contested areas between the two powers, and they were politically functional in the formation of a new internal power base for the Safavid Shahs. Since the deported populations were devoid of any political power or ties in Iran, they were given administrative and commercial powers by the Shahs in order to counter-balance the strife between the two main groups, the Qizilbash and the Iranians, whose loyalty to the shah defined the extent of his power, as became evident during Shah Tahmasp's succession. Conversely, the situation of this newly imported group, often termed the "third force," was entirely dependent on the goodwill of the Shahs. Their well-being and prosperity depended on their absolute loyalty to him. It has been shown earlier that this was not an accident of circumstance, but a clear political policy, at its zenith under Shah Abbas.

Despite all the attempts at forced conversions the Armenians suffered under the reign of Shah Abbas to the end of Safavid rule in Iran, they retained a religious freedom that was exceptionally liberal if compared to the other minorities. One can

only hypothesize as to why Christian Georgians and Armenians were given more religious freedom in a fiercely Shi'ite State, while Jews were persecuted ceaselessly. One possibility is that a policy of systematic conversion would have quickly integrated them within other groups and this newly constituted power base independent from the Iranians and from the Qizilbash lords could not then serve its internal political purpose as a stable and ever loyal power base to the Safavid Shahs.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the last violent forced conversions took place under Shah Abbas I. The later attempts described above remained comparatively mild because the Armenians effectively used the leverage of their position as intermediaries in both external commercial and political ties. In this respect, the above episode related by Chardin, which occurred under Shah Sulayman, is highly informative. To the order to convert *en masse* to Islam the Armenians respond: our merchants will not come back, they will settle elsewhere and this will cause you great financial loss and the Christian Princes of Europe will not let us practice commerce in their dominions. They put forth their Christianity as the condition for their success as intermediaries with the Christian West. The court acquiesced and left them in peace, which in itself is proof of the real importance of this role. Therefore a second hypothesis is that the Shahs realized that their Christian faith was instrumental in Safavid dealings with England, Holland, France and Russia.

These two hypotheses are in no way mutually exclusive. Both very likely were part of a conscious policy. Furthermore, their presence on the the local market, as steady buyers of silk for export, eased the pressure foreign companies might have otherwise exerted to obtain advantageous concessions:

The merchants had also managed, probably accidentally, to accomplish another objective of Shah Abbas' economic and political policies: by outbidding the British and the other European merchants for Persia's silk, they

staved off for at least fifty years, the direct European control of the Persian economy and the introduction of the system of Capitulations.¹⁰⁰

What is certain is that their presence in Isphahan offered a great advantage. For external commerce they were in a different sense a “third force” as well, acting both as a buffer and an intermediary between the large and powerful Western companies and the Shah.

Although it often has been repeated that the Armenian merchants functioned as intermediaries—and the Persian rulers also may have perceived them as such—the actual character of their role has remained far from evident. Nor is it a given that they simply served the interests of their host country. The organisation, the interests, the goals, and the actual nature of their international dealings all still remain to be explicated. It is this commercial role which will be further explored in this study. The next two chapters will attempt to clarify the structure of the community and the local government of New Julfa and analyze the organisation of the Armenian merchants.

¹⁰⁰Vartan Gregorian, in *IS* VII, p. 671.

CHAPTER III: THE COMMUNITY OF NEW JULFA

The King gave the government of this small Republic to Coaga Safar, Armenian; afterwards to his brother who was called Coaga Nazar, father of the one who is governing them at present.¹

This passage in Gabriel de Chinon refers to New Julfa, the Armenian suburb of Isphahan, as a small republic.² This detail has been overlooked in favor of more exotic descriptions. It is, however, an important piece of information. The following pages will attempt to establish that New Julfa was a quasi-autonomous republic. This is relevant here, because it was a republic governed by merchants.

However, before consulting the other sources to establish the factuality of this claim, there is a problem that needs clarification. New Julfa needs to be defined through the different periods of the seventeenth century. The name New Julfa has been used, without much precision, to refer to the whole of the southern Armenian suburb of Isphahan. What most of the travellers of the seventeenth century referred to as New Julfa was the suburb of Isphahan on the South bank of the Zayendeh Rud, an area inhabited exclusively by the Armenians settled there by Shah Abbas the First and the oldest settled neighborhoods of the suburb. This is only a part of what has always

¹"Le Roi donna le gouvernement de cette petite Republique, à Coaga Safar, Armenien; ensuite à son frère qui s'appelait Coaga Nazar, père de celui qui les gouverne à present." Gabriel de Chinon, *Relations nouvelles du Levant; ou Traités de la religion, du gouvernements, et des coutumes des Perses, des Arméniens et des Gaures*, (Paris: 1671), p. 254. Also cited in Carswell, p. 78.

²Recently the administration and organization of New Julfa have been the object of a detailed and serious study published in Soviet Armenia: Xaçikyan, S. L., *Nor Julayi hay vajarakanut'yunə ev nra arevratntesakan kapero rusastani het XVII ev XVIII darerum*. [*The Merchants of New Julfa and their commercial ties with Russia in the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries*.] Erevan: 1988. Over sixty pages of this study concern the organization and administration of New Julfa based on some sources unavailable outside Armenia, but mainly on Ter Yovhancanc' which has also been the source here.

been loosely designated as New Julfa in studies concerning the suburb.³ At the end of the seventeenth century, and as it is today, New Julfa comprised eight different neighborhoods: Great Maidan, Little Maidan, Erevan, Tabriz (or Mahlat), Łaragel(or Gazg), Čarsou, K'očer, Yacobjanenc'.⁴ This is not, however, the New Julfa to which the travellers refer. Gabriel de Chinon refers to the older part of the suburb settled between 1606 and 1614 with the Armenian merchants of the Armenian town of Julfa. It is important to make that distinction because the administration of this older neighborhood was distinct from the rest of the suburb settled later under Shah Abbas the Second in the middle of the century. References here to the administration of New Julfa only concern the older section of the suburb, as it always remained administratively distinct from the rest.

The land underneath this older section had been royal land, but was ceded as a gift to the Armenians by Shah Abbas the First through several royal edicts.⁵ The main artery of New Julfa was, and still remains, Nazar Avenue. Named after the richest and most prominent merchant of the time, it is 3276 paces long and 16 paces wide.⁶ It now defines the border of New Julfa, but used to be at its center. The richest merchants lived on the north side of this avenue, close to the river bank. This northern section has since disappeared. The main Avenue, Nazar Avenue, was divided into two sections. At the western gate of Šhafraz lived the adherents to the Armenian Apostolic Church, and at the eastern gate of Šahriman lived the Roman

³The only source to clearly make the necessary distinction is the history of New Julfa by Ter Yovhancanc'.

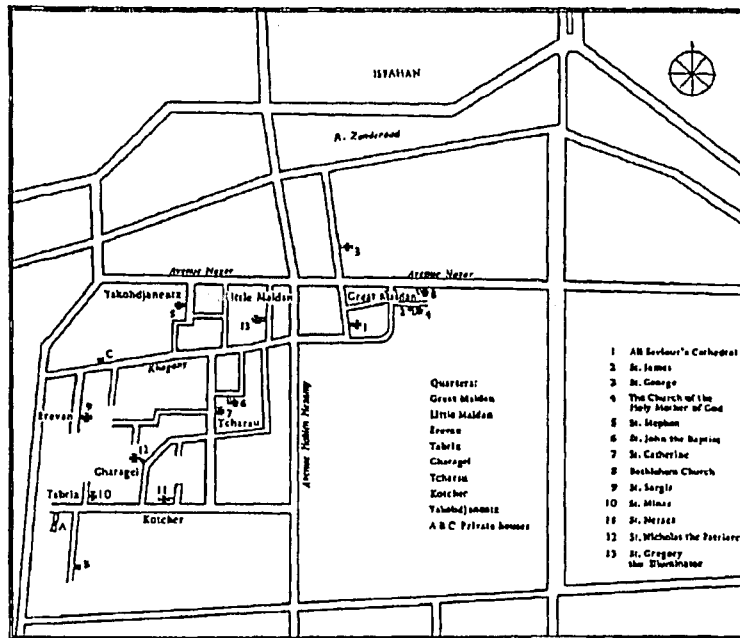
⁴See the map in Carswell, *New Julfa. The Armenian Churches and other Buildings*, pp. 19-20. The alternative names for the neighborhoods come from Ter Yovhancanc', volume I, p. 49.

⁵These edicts are translated into Armenian and published *in extenso* in Ter Yovhancanc', volume I, pp. 44-47.

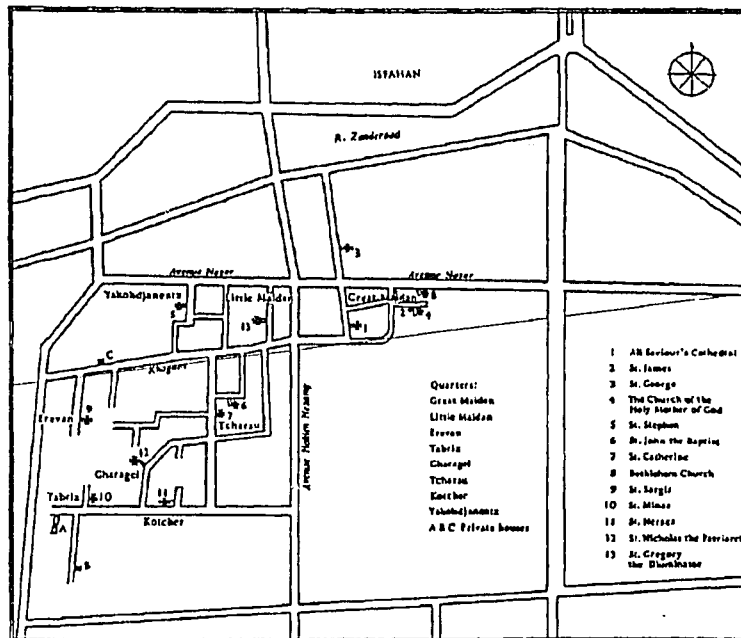
⁶Ter Yovhancanc', volume I, p. 48.

Catholics. The names again derive from the two foremost merchant families of those respective faiths.⁷

⁷*Ibid.*



Map of the area of New Julfa as found today (from the study by John Carswell)



Map of the older settlement (grayed area) within New Julfa where the merchants had houses since 1604

The older section of New Julfa, called “Old Julfa” in the *Farmān* of 1671,⁸ had as a northern border the river, as wide the whole 3276 paces of Nazar Avenue, and the neighborhood of Čarsou as its southern boundary. It comprised what came later to be known as the quarters of the Great Maidan, the little Maidan, Yacobjanenc', and none of the five others. This subdivision into three quarters was not important at the time. The ten streets crossing the main artery defined those quarters, called *tasneak* in Armenian.⁹ These distinct neighborhoods, subdivided by streets, were at the basis of the autonomous administration of New Julfa.¹⁰

The ascription of the name “Old Julfa” to these neighborhoods, as found in the *Farmān* of 1671, and as used by the Armenians themselves, should not be employed without a degree of caution. Such usage might lead to confusion with the original town of Julfa in historic Armenia. All further references to New Julfa in this study, unless otherwise specified, will refer to this older part inhabited by the Armenian merchants. This is the New Julfa which interested Tavernier and Chardin: a rich suburb of wealthy merchants.

“The Armenians of Zulpha have this advantage over all the other Christians of the Orient, that they possess land and have beautiful franchises, the king not permitting that the least injustice be done towards them nor that any Mahometan live in Zulpha.”¹¹

The small Armenian republic to which Gabriel de Chinon refers, was a merchant oligarchy reminiscent of, but otherwise unlike, the Italian city states. It was an

⁸See a part of the preceeding chapter under the heading “The Armenians under the reign of Shah Sulayman.”

⁹Ter Yovhancanc', volume I, p. 49.

¹⁰According to Š. Xač'ik'yan, this subdivision was a traditional subdivision in the administrative system of Armenia. Her source is Zacharia of Akuloulis. See p. 38.

¹¹This passage confirms that it is the old franchise of King Abbas the First to which the travellers refer. Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Les six voyages en Turquie et en Perse*, Tome II, (Paris: Maspero, 1981) p. 152. Translation my own: “Les Arméniens de Zulpha ont cet avantage entre tous les autres chrétiens d'Orient qu'ils possèdent des terres et de belles franchises, le roi ne permettant pas qu'on leur fasse la moindre injustice ni qu'aucun Mahometain demeure à Zulpha.”

autonomous city of merchants—not a state. It lacked some of the important elements that define a city-state such as a private mercenary army and real political independance from neighboring powers. Whatever powers or authority its important officials might have held, were accepted or delegated to them according to the wishes of the Safavid shah, and were therefore revocable.

The Administration of New Julfa

Each neighborhood, or *tasneak*, had a chief, or headman, called a *tasnakavak*. The neighborhood was known by the name of its head. After many successions of this function within one family, the family in charge of the neighborhood might have changed, but the family name designating the neighborhood remained the same. As a rule, older names predominated. The function of *tasnakavak* was always given¹² to the most important merchant in a given neighborhood. There were twenty subdivisions to this part of New Julfa, each represented by a *tasnakavak* at the regular meetings of the municipal council.¹³ All matters internal to New Julfa which did not concern the Church or the Persian court were administered by the reunions (*žofov*) of these neighborhood chiefs presided over by the *kalantar*. The *kalantar* was the single most important official among the Armenians. Among the many responsibilities within his jurisdiction was the selection of the heads of the neighborhoods.

¹²It was given by the Kalantar as we will make clear later.

¹³The names of these *Tasnakavak* are listed by Ter Yovhancanc'. He extracted them from promissory notes written in New Julfa. The example he lists in his footnotes is a late one (1735). See note 6, p. 50, in volume I. He lists the twenty names of the *Tasnakavak*: Dilak'enc', Mec Xojenc', Firmosenc', Gilanenc', Balramenc', Avagenc', Mirmanenc', Zekeanc', Israēlenc', Fanosenc', Topčenc', Jaxat'ounenc', Ločlarenc', T'alvalenc', Alijanenc', Ter Ananenc', Moušelenc', Łaradanenc', Avag Edanenc', and Davt'enc'. See pp. 49 -50. In a document that will be analysed later in the section on the foreign relations of New Julfa, a treaty between the merchants of New Julfa and the Russian Tsar dating from 1671, Š. Xačikyan recognizes the twenty names of the *Tasnakavak* for 1671. This is an indication of the subdivisions into twenty neighborhoods remaining steady, at least between 1671 and 1735.

“The King gave the government of this small republic to Coaga Safar...,”¹⁴ as quoted above, refers to Khoja Safar, the *Kalantar* of New Julfa. This small passage in Gabriel de Chinon provides several details that are accurate about the post of *kalantar*:¹⁵ first, he was appointed by the Shah, and functioned as the governor of the community. The post usually was hereditary, remaining in the same family for generations. Khoja Safar himself was the wealthiest merchant in his community. Gabriel de Chinon further elaborates that Khoja Safar’s brother Nazar succeeded him, and that at the death of Khoja Nazar, his own son Khoja Safras assumed the position of *Kalantar* of New Julfa. He affirms that Khodja Safras had the most beautiful and richly furnished house in all the country, excluding the royal palace. Gabriel de Chinon estimates Khoja Safras’ wealth at 12,000 toumans. His total worth was constantly augmented by the commerce carried out by other merchants in his service.¹⁶

As stated above, New Julfa was administratively autonomous, governed by the Armenian merchants themselves, except for matters directly concerning the Persian court. For such matters, which fell under Persian jurisdiction, the *kalantar* was the intermediary between the Shah and the Armenian community.

The nature of the internal administrative affairs of New Julfa was vast in scope. The municipal reunions discussed and settled such matters as: the collection of the

¹⁴See note 1.

¹⁵The post of *Kalantar* under the Safavid has thoroughly been studied by A.K. Lambton “The office of the *Kalantar* under the Safavids and the Afshars.” *Mélanges.. Henri Massé* (Teheran: 1963) pp. 206-218. According to her the administrative system of the Safavids had its roots in the Aq Quyunlu. The word *Kalantar* is present in the post-Ilkhan period when the word *rais* declines. The *Kalantar* of Isphahan was mainly concerned with guild supervision. The Armenians had their own *kalantar* who was an Armenian. He was the provost of the merchants. A. K. Lambton’s study further supports evidence that the Armenians were autonomous of the rest of the administrative system since they did not fall under the jurisdiction of the *Kalantar* of Isphahan.

¹⁶Gabriel de Chinon, p. 254. The office of *Kalantar* is referred to in the introduction to the TM by Vladimir Minorsky, and is analysed in detail by: Lambton, A. K. “The Office of the *Kalantar* under the Safavids and Afghans.” *Mélanges...Henri Massé*, (Tehran: 1963) p. 206-18.

royal taxes, water distribution among the many houses and gardens of New Julfa, the security of the suburb, and the guarding and closing of the gates. New Julfa was walled and protected by several gates. All Moslem visitors were to leave the suburb by nightfall.¹⁷ Beyond such purely local matters, the reunions were a general forum for discussing the security of the commercial routes, commercial taxation and merchant affairs. The merchants also had powerful impact on the Church which they financially supported, and often influenced the election of Church officials. Important religious matters that concerned the community as a whole also fell within the pale of their concerns. No church officials were present at this assembly of merchants.¹⁸

Although the administration of New Julfa is not a direct concern here, it is important to note that the administration of the entire community was in the hands of the merchants. The term mercantile oligarchy is appropriate since administrative power was in the hands of a few important trading families. As stated above, the *kalantar*, often the most prominent merchant among them, chose the heads of the neighborhoods. Furthermore he was the only direct link with the court. The ready access he had to court, and the intimacy of the Shah with the Armenian *Kalantar* and his family, have been pointed out in many travel accounts concerned with the reign of Shah Abbas, as well as in the writings of Arak'el.¹⁹ Moreover, since this municipal assembly of merchants acted as the civil court for merchant affairs, the *Kalantar* acted in the capacity of a civil judge in certain legal matters. In the analysis of the Armenian merchant organization and methods in the next chapter, it becomes clear that it was the central civil court for both litigations and other legal transactions that

¹⁷Carswell, p. 13.

¹⁸Տ. Ճաճիկյան pp. 39-41.

¹⁹Arak'el, chapter V.

might have occurred as far away as India or Holland. If there was not a proper assembly of merchants to adjudicate the matter locally, in France, Italy, Holland or wherever, the case was referred to the assembly of merchants in New Julfa.²⁰

In addition to the *kalantar*, there was a second official appointed by the Shah for the administration of New Julfa:

They yearly pay the King 500 *Tomans*, and have an Armenian to Govern them, whom they call *Kelonter*, that is to say the greatest, and he is put in and turned out by the King when he pleases. They address themselves to this *Kelonter* in all their Affairs, and Controversies, and it is he that Taxes them for raising the five hundred *Tomans*, which they yearly pay the King. But besides the *Kelonter* they have another Royal Officer, who is a *Deroga*, for judging their criminal affairs.²¹

The official referred to in this passage, the *daroga*, was the judge for local Armenian affairs. He was from the Armenian community, but the texts are confusing as to the manner of his appointment. Daulier Deslalandes writes that “he is a judge of their religion that they have the King agree to.”²² This leads to the conclusion that he was chosen by the community then officially accepted by the Shah. Elsewhere, other important appointments were made in the same manner, such as that of the Katholikos of Ejmiacin, which was a religious office that required the official acceptance and appointment of the Persian Shahs during their rule over Historic Armenia. The Katholikos was not, however, chosen or elected by the Shah, but by his own religious community.²³ The appointment of the *kalantar* by the Shah is supported by some passages in the travel accounts:

²⁰See: Khachikian, Levon. “Le registre d’un marchand arménien en Perse, en Inde et au Tibet (1682-1693).” *Annales* XXII, 2 (March-April 1967): p. 231-278.

²¹ Jean de Thévenot, *The Travels of M. de Thévenot into the Levant*. chapter II, Book III, (London, 1687). Cited in Carswell, p. 78.

²² André Daulier Deslalandes, *Les Bateaux de la Perse, ou la Description de ce qu’il y a de plus curieux dans ce royaume....* (Paris 1673) p. 51. Cited on Carswell, p. 51.

²³See Chapter 2 of this dissertation. The source for this information is Arak’el who clearly mentions the mechanisms involved in this appointment and election several times during the course of his history.

The King names who he pleases among the Armenians to be their chief and to govern them under royal authority. He is called Kelonter, and it is he who is their judge in the differences that can occur among them, and who taxes them to make them the sum they need to pay to the king every year.²⁴

There is even more of a confusion over who the *daroga* was. The passages consulted and cited here seem to confirm that he was an Armenian. A. K. Lambton has concluded in her articles that the *daroga* was always Persian.²⁵ Given that there is evidence in the texts to the contrary, it will be maintained here that he was an Armenian: "he is a judge of their religion that they have the King agree to."²⁶

Not all the inhabitants of New Julfa were merchants; there was an important number of artisans among them. The crafts were organized and each had a head master or *ustabashi*. Presiding over all of the head masters of the different crafts was a single head or chief *ustabashi*. Each dealt with their own affairs independently and held regular reunions.²⁷ Little is known about these groups of artisans.²⁸ The word

²⁴ Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Les six voyages en Turquie et en Perse* (Paris, Maspero 1981) Tome II, p. 152. Translation my own: "Le roi nomme celui qui lui plait d'entre les Arméniens pour être leur chef et les gouverner sous l'autorité royale. On l'appelle Kelonter et c'est lui qui est leur juge dans les différends qui peuvent leur survenir, et qui les taxe pour faire la somme qu'ils doivent payer tous les ans au roi."

²⁵ A. K. Lambton, "The Office of the Kalantar under the Safavids and the Afshars." *Mélanges* ..Henri Massé (Teheran: 1963) pp. 206-18.

²⁶ André Daulier Deslandes, *Les Bateux de la Perse, ou la Description de ce qu'il ya d plus curieux dans ce royaume....* (Paris: 1673) p. 51. Cited in Carswell, p. 78. The narrations of both Figueroa and De Bruyn confirm the fact that the Deroga was an Armenian. De Bruyn further makes clear that there was a Persian judge for criminal affairs which concerned the king. So several texts make it clear that the Deroga was an Armenian judge for common and civil affairs. See the citations of both authors picked out by Carswell pp.77-81, Carswell was not concerned with this problem at all but fortunately picked out three passages giving information about this moot point. We cannot see where A. K. Lambton found information to the contrary, or is it a confusion of terms between the Armenian judge for civil affairs and the Persian judge for criminal affairs? All she states in her brief passage on New Julfa is that the Daroga was always Persian.

²⁷ Šušan Xačikyan, p.36.

²⁸ There is a passage in Chardin which speaks of "the Polity of the Persian tradesmen." He does not mention the Armenians, but if one wanted to extrapolate a hypothesis based on the local system in the bazars etc., this would be a useful passage. He seems to suggest that even if the trades have an appointed head accepted by the King, that is where their government stops that it does not mean they form "a regular body." See: Sir John Chardin, *Travels in Persia 1673-77*, (N. Y.: Dover Press, 1988) pp. 250-251.

'corporation' tentatively might be applied to such groups, as there was some form of organization and administration within the crafts.²⁹ These craftsmen were, among others: goldsmiths, blacksmiths, printers (after 1640), masons, tailors, stonecutters, weavers, furriers, watchmakers (latter part of the century), and carpenters.³⁰ The head *ustabashi* seems to have had a role in the general administration of New Julfa and to have been counted among the ranks of the other local officials.³¹ While it is tempting to establish a parallel with the administrative role played by the guilds (*arti*) in some Italian city-states, it remains at best a dangerous temptation, since nothing is known about these corporations or their role. The Armenian Church itself, beyond its role as a religious institution, was another important center of authority for the administration of the community and merchant affairs.

The Administrative role of the Armenian Church

Did Shah Abbas I consciously attempt to make the newly established Armenian suburb a religious center for the Armenians? Considering the series of events surrounding its establishment, the answer seems to be affirmative. Not only had he the clear intention of destroying Ejmiacin and transporting it stone by stone to New

²⁹To my knowledge there is no social study of the artisans of New Julfa. For Armenian craft organization for the 18-20th century there is: V. A. Abrahamyan, *Hay Hamk'arut'younnerō Andrkowkasi K'alāk'neroum. 18-20 rd dari skizbō* [Armenian Corporations in Transcaucasia 18-20 centuries.], (Erevan: 1971).

³⁰See footnote 67, p.680 in Vartan Gregorian's article. The information is from a Persian author, Raiin who cites no sources. The dates in the brackets are mine. The first printed book in Julfa is dated 1638. As for watchmaking, it was a European craft, and under Shah Abbas there were some exchanges that could have made it possible for Armenians to be trained either in Iran or Europe by European masters. What is certain however is the presence in Iran of an eminent Swiss Protestant watchmaker, now buried in the Armenian cemetery of Tabriz. His story is related by Jean Chardin in the latter part of the century.

³¹In studying a treaty between the Armenians of New Julfa and the Russian Tsar in 1671, Šušan Xačikyan identifies the 22 signatures on the treaty as belonging to the *Kalantar*, the *Ustabashi*, and the twenty *Tasnakavag*. See Š. Xačikyan, pp. 25-28. He therefore has some administrative importance, but nothing beyond this can be established in the present state of our knowledge.

Julfa, he also helped secure some of the most sacred relics of the Armenian Church for the new population of New Julfa. Thanks to the intervention of the *Kalantar*, the Shah ultimately did not destroy Ejmiacin, but symbolically had three stones from it transported to New Julfa.³² The construction of churches began as soon as the Armenians were settled. They were greatly encouraged by the Monarch, who sent skilled masons to aid them.³³ The Shah's presence at important Armenian religious ceremonies has often been noted, but has been interpreted merely as a gesture of goodwill toward his subject people. Given the acute political mind of this ruler, simple consideration is an insufficient explanation. His presence gave the ceremonies at New Julfa greater political importance. Although a comprehensive study on the Armenian Church during the seventeenth remains to be done, it seems apparent that at the beginning of the century Ējmiacin suffered greatly from physical destruction and burdensome taxation. Simultaneously, its authority was suffering from many rivalries among the higher ranks of the clergy. New Julfa's clergy, its powerful merchants and the Shah himself seem to have had clear roles both in the factionalization and decline of the authority of this center of the Armenian church.³⁴ While still theoretically under the authority of Ējmiacin, New Julfa benefited from its weakening, and began to emerge as an important religious and administrative center. Until the restoration of Ējmiacin in the middle of the century, under the leadership of the Katholikos Phillipos, the patriarchs of Constantinople and the patriarch of New Julfa both

³²Arak'el, chapters 16 and 18.

³³Arak'el, chapter 5.

³⁴Again this impression is derived from reading Arak'el and Zacharia Sarkavag, but there have not been any studies on the history of Ejmiacin at the time.

achieved an importance and an autonomy that otherwise would have been impossible.³⁵

The administrative role played by the Armenian church is directly relevant to merchant affairs. The religious and administrative authority of the church in New Julfa was very expansive in scope and stretched far beyond the boundaries of this suburb. It maintained jurisdiction over all the Armenians in Iran, including other suburbs of Isphahan, Shiraz, Rasht, Hamadan, Anzali, Kashan, Qazvin, and Tehran, as well as Basra and Baghdad.³⁶ The New Julfa see extended its jurisdiction over Armenians outside Iran as well. The Armenians in India depended upon local priests, if they were present, who in turn were under the direct jurisdiction of New Julfa. Some such locations were: Surat which had jurisdiction over Bombay, Jahanabad, Hyderabad; Madras which had jurisdiction over Mushlibandar, Batavia and Rangoon; and Calcutta which had jurisdiction over Saidabad, Dacca and other locations.³⁷

This is of great importance once one recognizes that the Armenian church was the only institution serving civil legal needs and was the repository for legal records. It dealt not only with birth and baptism, marriage and death, but with wills and legal power of attorney. Given that every merchant, upon embarking on a long journey, made a will and gave power of attorney to someone among his kin,³⁸ the church was directly involved with merchant affairs through its legal power. Even if commercial disputes and other civil suits were dealt with in a civil court constituted of merchants, all legal documents had to be finally legalized by the Armenian Church. This

³⁵A word of caution is necessary here. The source that seems to point to this hypothesis has as author a priest attached to the service of Catholicos Phillipos who ordered Arak'el to compose his histories. It is a possibility that in order to glorify his catholicos Arak'el exaggerates the destitution and destruction of Ejmiacin before "his beneficial reign."

³⁶*Ter yovhancanc'*, volume II, pp. 104-109.

³⁷*See Š. Xač'yan*, p. 53.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 91.

enhanced the autonomous status of the Armenians, as it meant they were not dependent on the Safavid state for their civil judicial needs.

In the French archives there exists an interesting example of the authority the Church had in a community divested of a state. While investigating the story of an Armenian merchant who had served the French East India Company, there appeared versions of his trial against that Company. At the beginning of one of the folders there is an amazing document. It is an attestation signed by the Armenian church that the merchant in question, Marcara Avanchinz, was of noble origins. It seems that the French Company attempted to find grounds in the claim that he was not a nobleman to dismiss his grievances against the Company. Strange as it may seem today, it must have been of the utmost importance, for both sides went to great lengths to establish the truth or falsity of his claims to noble ancestry. The certificate³⁹ came all the way from Isphahan. The translation was done by father Raphaël du Mans and the signatures of the Armenian clergy were witnessed by none other than Jean Baptiste Tavernier, and several French jewelers working for the Shah of Persia. It was the fourth such certificate establishing his origins and genealogy; the others which had preceded it were signed by Armenian merchants of Isphahan. The first had been notarized by the Burgmaster of Amsterdam; the second, drawn up in Venice, had been legalized by the Doge of Venice. Nothing is said of the third certificate, but it seems that the fourth one, signed by the Armenian church, was to be considered the most important, and the one constituting absolute proof.⁴⁰ In the absence of a state therefore, it was the Armenian church that was the institution that took care of all civil affairs including, as this case proves, those of merchants abroad who ran into hurdles.

³⁹Archives of the Bibliothèque nationales, Manus. Fr. 8972, folio 192 verso. For the copy of this certificate see p. 69.

⁴⁰Archives of the Bibliothèque nationales, Manus. Fr. 8972, folio 194 recto.

This study will return to the story of Marcara and his misadventures, about which there is much to say, as his biography is an important part of this study. The certificate attesting that he was of noble birth was doubly interesting as the Avanchinz family does not figure among the first most prominent merchant families of Isphahan, nor the next twenty, nor the next thirty. Not only did the Armenians of the seventeenth century not have a landed aristocracy,⁴¹ and thus the claims to nobility that the French required, it seems that Marcara was of a relatively modest background. To put his predicament into its proper context, the prominent families of Isphahan and the family system⁴² that ruled both its administration and its merchant affairs will be examined. As a consequence of the fact that Marcara did not belong to any of these prominent clans, but was therefore a rather obscure merchant from Isphahan, one might suspect that there was more than solidarity expressed in the certificate from the Armenian clergy.

⁴¹Except in small bastions in the mountains that remained independent.

⁴²For lack of any terminology having previously been coined for this, we have chosen to use this term to denote not simple family solidarity, but truly a system of administration and business deriving from a way of life. We will come back to it with merchant organization. In Armenian, the term for an extended family unit is *tohm*. It is defined above further in this chapter, and when we refer to the family. It is to this definition of a rather extended family unit that we are referring.

Acte qui justifie la Naissance du Sieur Marcara.

TRES-UISSANT ET TRES-ABSOLU MONARQUE CHASELEMAN

Moy David Vertapied & Evêque de Julpha, j'ay été présent, lorsque Messieurs les Armeniens, dont les noms sont cy-dessous écrits ont donné témoignage pour Monsieur Mardiros Avachins.

Moy Estienne Vertapied & Evêque de Julpha, je sçay que Monsieur Mardiros Avachins, fils de Marcara, est de une illustre & noble Famille.

Moy Michel Vertapied, je connois que Mardiros est de grande Famille, & Noble.

Moy Jean Vertapied, je sçay que Mardiros est de grande Famille & Noble, & je l'ay soussigné de ma propre main.

Moy Alexandre Vertapied, je suis assuré que Mardiros Avachins est de grande Famille & Noble.

Moy Serge, Curé dans l'Eglise de Saint Estienne de Julpha, je suis certain que Mardiros Avachins est de grande Famille & Noble.

Moy Jean, Curé dans l'Eglise de Beilicem de Julpha, j'atteste que Mardiros Avachins est de grande Famille & Noble.

Moy Isaac, Curé dans l'Eglise N. Dame de Julpha, j'atteste que Monsieur Mardiros est de grande Famille & Noble.

Moy Pierre, Curé dans l'Eglise Saint Jacques, je connois que Monsieur Mardiros Avachins est de grande Famille & Noble.

Moy Azarie, Curé dans l'Eglise du Saint Esprit de Julpha, je suis assuré que Monsieur Mardiros Avachins est de grande Famille & Noble.

Moy Arillaques, Curé dans l'Eglise de N. Dame de Julpha, je reconnois que le Sieur Mardiros de Marcara Avachins est d'illustre & de grande Famille, & juy, comme les Frères, vous considérez chez nous.

Moy Margare, Prêtre, j'affirme ce que dessus véritable.

Moy AVENTIS, fils autrefois de Chacik Barachins, Habitant de la Ville d'Ispham Capitale de Perle, établi par le Roy des Perses, Gouverneur des Armeniens dans le Quartier de Julpha; j'ay appelé plusieurs Personnes de qualité, les plus considerables & les plus anciens Citoyens, tant Ecclesiastiques, qu'autres, pour rendre témoignage de la Famille, de la Generation & de la Tribu de Monsieur Mardiros, fils de Marcara. Tous ces Messieurs Armeniens, Témoins, m'ont assuré de la Famille & de la Tribu dudit Sieur Mardiros, & qu'il étoit de la Noble Famille de Marcara. Lesquels Témoins ont écrit plus bas leurs Noms & Surnoms de leur propre main, & y ont appliqué leurs Sceaux. Et voicy le témoignage de ces Témoins, qui assurent que Monsieur Mardiros Avachins est de grande Famille & d'une Tribu considerable, & fils autrefois de Marcara, Citoyen de la Ville de Julpha; & à present encore le même Mardiros & ses Freres, sont personnes de grande qualité & de tres grande consideration parmi nous.

M oy Cyrine, fils de Chacik, j'atteste que tout ce qui est cy dessus déclaré, est tres véritable.	Umbrenaga, fils de Guerec	Oscan, fils de Margare.
Moy Jean Tavar, j'atteste encore la même chose, en presence de tous les hommes, & je le soussigne de ma propre main, & y ay apposé mon sceau, comme tous les autres cy-aprés.	Evas, fils de Haluit.	Nazarer, fils de Margare.
Saphar, fils d'Agavely.	Maruc, fils de Simon.	re.
Pierre, fils d'Agavely.	Gregoire Luciens.	Chacik, fils d'Alaverdy.
Evidie, fils de Jovan.	Satur, fils de Nicolas.	Estienne, fils de Diluc.
Margare, fils de Jovan.	Vatan, fils de Georges.	Malim, fils de Bargan.
Karapier, fils de Jin.	Chogigian, fils d'Avenicq.	Hecapiel, fils de Edgary.
Saphar, fils de Pierre.	Zacharie, fils de Guerec.	Paul, fils de Agogan.
Matthieu, fils de Jacques.	Luc, fils de Pierre.	Avac, fils de Jin.
Estienne, fils d'Agaphir.	Gregoire, fils de Margare.	Jean, fils de Gregoire.
David, fils de Margare.	re.	Minas, fils de Matthieu.
Melienas, fils de Sarad.	Paul, fils de Manuel.	Agazar, fils de Camal.
	Sultangul, fils de Tashly.	Zieur, fils de Paul.
	Manazican, fils de Gregoire.	Chaciatur, fils de Lazar.
	Canan, fils de Minas.	re.
	Marum, fils de Jan.	Jan, fils de Jacques.
	Bargan, fils de Giangty.	Zvira, fils d'Estienne.
	Agam.h, fils de Nufic.	Michel, fils de Miazar.
	Agazar, fils de Paul.	Agamal, fils de Bargan.
	Minas, fils d'Estienne.	Thadée, fils de Bagum.
	Pannot, fils d'Avenicq.	Balsasar, fils de Gregoire.
		Oscan, fils de Jean.

CE Papier icy est un Acte que les Armeniens de Julpha ont passé entr'eux : Les Seings qui sont à main gauche, sont de leur Clergé; & les Seings à main droite, sont de leurs Principaux. F. R. A. P. H. A. S. E. ou M. A. M. S. Superieur des PP. Capucins Missionnaires en Hilspham. Ce 19. Novembre 1681.

Nous P. Tavernier, attestons que la presente Attestation, sont les véritables signatures & sceaux des premiers de Julpha.

Nous Helie Grangier, François de Nation, & Orphevre du Roy de Perle, atteste que le present Acte a été fait en Julpha, & signé des premiers des Armeniens. H. ELIE GRANGIER.

Le Sieur Marcara a produit trois Certificats passés pardevant les Notaires publics de Venise, d'Amsterdam & de Ligourne, lesquels sont relatifs au present Acte.

Certificate from the Armenian Church in New Julfa preserved in the French Archives, which attests Marcara Avenchins nobility (FF No. 8972 Fo192vo)

The church was supported by merchant money, mainly by the most prominent families. The lesser merchants were protected by the prominent ones in return for their services. There was a structure in their dealings, and the safeguarding of the interests of one merchant was of concern to the whole group. Before elaborating on this system, it will be necessary to make known the names of the principal families who ruled the suburb of Isphahan.

The Merchant Families of New Julfa

It would be impossible to understand anything about either merchant organization or the administration of New Julfa without the realization that the basic unit of the whole social structure was the family, or *tohm* in Armenian.⁴³ Once again comparisons to medieval Italian merchant families spring to mind. The Armenians of New Julfa had the family as the basis of both their political and commercial systems. This was neither new to the Armenians, nor a feature of the Diaspora or the merchant class. It was the ancient system the landed aristocracy of Armenia had always favored, and the basis on which they functioned. There is, however, a major difference the merchant families of New Julfa and those of Italy. As New Julfa's families lived under Persian rule, its merchants could not raise the armies of mercenaries that the Sforza or the Medici themselves bought. Furthermore, there is complete dearth of clear evidence concerning guild organization, or any great Armenian interest in the crafts that could push the comparison to the Italian city-states

⁴³The feudal organization of the Kingdom of Armenia is discussed at length by Nicholas Adontz. For a full discussion of the Armenian *tohm* as a structural unit of the feudal organization of the Armenian kingdom see: Adontz, Nicholas. *Armenia in the period of Justinian*. Trans. N. G. Garsoian.

to viability. Otherwise, there is much in common, vast and richly decorated houses,⁴⁴ patronage of the arts, international contacts, financial support of the church, political and administrative power over their respective groups.

They [the Armenians] have sumptuous Houses, enriched either by being merchants or foreign interpreters to foreign ministers, they being addicted to learning languages; few care for the manual arts or to Mechanick trades, though some apply themselves to husbandry ⁴⁵

There were not only wealthy merchants living in splendid houses in New Julfa, although they seem to have been the most conspicuous to the travellers, and thus to their readers. Raphael du Mans has described the wives of these rich Khojas all covered in silk and sachets. He is, however, quite harsh about the poor aesthetic results of such expenditure on their husbands part. In a suprisingly bold passage for a religious man, after many a graphic description, he calls them "moving tons and piles of dung."⁴⁶ These were not the wives of the average merchant. It is apparent from other travel accounts that most women wore traditional Armenian clothing and headdress,⁴⁷ although there was freedom of dress in Iran contrarily to Turkey.

There seems to have been three categories of merchants. There were those who never travelled and did not own local storehouses or store fronts, who entered into financial transactions and invested capital in the both local and international deals made by other merchants. A second group of merchants, not as prosperous as the

⁴⁴Several travellers describe the Armenian houses of the rich Khojas. Gabriel de Chignon clearly states that apart from the Shah palace there was no place as beautifull as the house of the Šafraz. See Carswell, p.78. Carswell has also studied the plans of some remaining houses in New Julfa, but the richer houses that were located on the Northern bank of the river are no longer there.

⁴⁵John Fryer, cited in Carswell's architectural study of Isphahan, p. 83.

⁴⁶"Pour leurs habits ils sont d'estoffes flus fines et plus riches que les femmes des Mores, car leur maris apportent d'Occident ce qu'ils peuvent pour couvrir ces fumiers. Avec tout cela on dirait des sacs et des poches bastés sur des tonnes mouvantes;- leur mamelles grosses et pendantes par devant font paroître comme trois corps, de sorte qu'un François qui passait par icy, il y quelques quatorze ou quinze ans, en voyant ces grosses tripieres, avoit raison de demander si c'estoit des femmes comme en Occident." Père Raphaël du Mans, *L'etat de la Perse*, (Paris: 1660) p. 45. See also: Carswell, p. 87.

⁴⁷See the extracts chosen by Carswell on Armenian dress, p. 83.

first, did not travel either, but owned both storehouses and storefronts in the neighborhood of Naxš-e Jahan. The third group were the travelling merchants, among whom both wealthy and less prosperous merchants could be found, but none among them had the fortune of the Khojas.⁴⁸ Those commonly referred to as Khojas are those of the first group only. If they ever travelled it was to go and establish themselves elsewhere or for an exceptional cause. It is to this group that the four or five most prominent families of New Julfa belong.

The prominent families of New Julfa have been studied in depth both for their genealogies and accomplishments by Ter Yovhaneanc,⁴⁹ who has written a history of New Julfa based on the archives kept at the Museum of the All Saviour Church. A *History of New Julfa* is a compendium of the genealogies of these families, the dates of new migrations to New Julfa, the dates of construction of churches and a narration of the policy of the Persian court towards the Armenians. It is a rather complete work on the genealogies of these families and remains a reference work of great value.

At the beginning of this chapter when speaking of the geography of the streets of New Julfa, it was mentioned that the main avenue, Nazar Avenue, was divided into two sections: the gate of the Šahrimean to the east was the Roman Catholic neighborhood, and the gate of the Šafraz to the west was the neighborhood of the Apostoloic Armenian Church. There also was occasion to mention that the *Kalantar* was a member of the Šafraz family for several generations.⁵⁰ Nazar Avenue was named after a prominent khoja and *kalantar* of the Šafraz family. The other well-

⁴⁸Š. Xač'ikyan, p. 56. Her source for this is a conversation between an Armenian merchants from Julfa and a European merchant curious of their ways. The Armenian describes this hierarchy in the dialect of New Julfa. This is recorded in Shroeder, Amsterdam 1711. We have not been able to consult this compendium of the Armenian language. Yet, the next chapter brings ample proof for this classification.

⁴⁹Ter Yohaneanc', Yarut'iwn T'. *Patmut'iwn Nor Julayi. (Spahan). [History of New Julfa. (Isphahan).]* (Nor Jula: Amenaprkič Vank, 1980) First posthumus edition 1880.

⁵⁰ See the beginning of this chapter, and the quotations of Gabriel de Chinon.

known family of the suburb were the Lazarians, made famous by the Institute they later founded in Russia in the eighteenth century, decades after they moved there—as did the Šafras or Šafrasean, who are best known for their presenting a throne to the Tsar. A short while earlier, the Catholic Šahrimanean left Iran for Venice. While in Iran these three families, together with a fourth one, the Minasenc', were the foremost families of the Armenian community. They remained in Isphahan a little over one hundred years. During that time their situations remained prosperous.

They left Iran before the Afghan invasions of 1722. The information in chapter five of this study is in part devoted to their search for other places to settle at the end of the century. The received opinion has been that the wealthier Armenian merchants left in 1722 for India. As has been discussed in chapter two, there was a crisis at the end of the seventeenth century that changed the nature of their opportunities in Iran. India was just one of several destinations.

The Palazzo Šahrimanean is now one of the most luxurious hotels in Venice.⁵¹ The prosperity they had known in Safavid Iran, they continued to achieve elsewhere. This in itself gives credence to the suspicion that their fortunes were not built entirely on a privileged position as intermediaries for the court of the Shahs. They had a flexible and adaptable system of conducting commerce that did not depend entirely on local circumstances. It is this commercial organization of lesser merchants at the service of wealthier ones, and the commercial techniques that they used which are going to be examined in the following section.

⁵¹ R. H. Kévorkian, "Renaissance économique et culturelle des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècle." *Arménie 3000 ans d'histoire*, (Marseille: 1988) pp. 223-238.

New Julfa's Language and Calendar

One of the most interesting and puzzling aspects of the life of the Armenian community of New Julfa is the specificity of their language and their calendar. New Julfa had its own calendar, different from the one used by the Armenian Apostolic Church, and different from the Persian calendar of their host country. It was used only in the suburb and by its merchants across the world. It is found in the account book of Hovhannes of Julfa. He kept his daily accounts marked under the date of the *Azaria* Calendar. This calendar attributed to a certain Azaria of Julfa is called by Hovhannes “the small number of Azaria”. It was invented in New Julfa but was also found in India where the New Julfa merchants made its usage widespread among the Armenians.⁵²

Year one of the *Azaria* calendar begins on March 21st 1615. A year begins on the 21st of March and ends on the 20th; it is divided into thirteen months. The twelve first months are of thirty days, the thirteenth month is only of five or six days (leap years). The months are called: *Shams, Adam, Shbat, Nakha, Ghamar, Tira, Dama, Hamira, Aram, Ovdan, Nirhan* and *Avelyac*’.

One notices immediatly that the year begins with the Persian New year. The Persian New year on the 21st of March is unrelated to Islamic tradition. It has survived from the older Persian Zoroastrian tradition. Zoroastrianism is a tradition common to both ancient Armenia and Persia.⁵³ The division into thirteen months is a direct influence from the Armenian calendar.

The names of the months are linguistically intresting. It would merit a deepeer study than the one offered here which concentrates on what is evident at first sight to

⁵²Levon Khachikian, *Registre*, p. 277.

⁵³For more information on the Zoroastrian tradition in Armenia one must refer to James Russell’s published published dissertation.

someone familiar with both Persian and Armenian. The intent here is to point out the existence of this calendar in the hope that someone more qualified will analyze it. The thirteenth month, *Avelyac*⁵⁴, has a name of Armenian origin, meaning “added”. It is well named as it is comprised of the extra days left in a calendar of thirty days per month. There are two months with names which refer to the Christian Armenian tradition of biblical genealogy : *Adam* (21 April-21 May)⁵⁴, *Aram* (21st of December- 21st of January), who is considered the ancestor of the Armenians. The names *Shams* (21st March -21st of April) first month of the calendar and *Ghamar* (21st of July-21st of August), have names of Arabic origin meaning sun and moon. The name *Shams* does not conjure the Arabic deity. The two words were well integrated into the Armenian language and can be found in the songs and poems of the *Ashoughs*. *Tira* (21st of September- 21st of October) is reminiscent of the Persian month *Tir*, but this is misleading since it does not correspond to it. *Tir* is the fourth solar month of the Persian calendar when the sun is in Cancer (22 of June-22nd of July). This month is the month of the autumn equinox, the word for Autumn in modern Persian or in Armenian is of no help. The word in Tajik for Autumn is *Tiramah*. *Dama* (21st of October- 21st of November) seems to be of Arabic origin and means wind and snow. *Hamira* (21st of November-21st of December) may well also be of Arabic origin meaning rain-shower. The other months are not as evident to translate.

The calendar does not illustrate well the heavily Persianized dialect that is still spoken to this day in New Julfa. The dwellers of New Julfa have to this day a specific accent and a Persian vocabulary that is the object of many jokes among the other Armenians from Iran. Even if the other groups have adopted some Persian

⁵⁴These evaluated dates are our own. The calendar begins on the 21st of March in its old style, on the 2nd of April in its new style. See: Khachikian, Levon. *Registre*. p. 277. We have kept the 21st of March and evaluated the other months accordingly.

terms, they are not comparable to the Isphahani Armenians. It is often lightly explained that this is due to their stay of near four hundred years in Iran. This explanation certainly does not hold if one realises that this Persianization is there very early. It is certainly present within the first three generations having inhabited the suburb. The hypothesis here is that this immediate Persianization occurred because of the occupation of the inhabitants of New Julfa. For trade their discussions consisted of moneys, weights and measures, goods, taxes, and tax collectors. Within these limits they had to employ the terms of the countries they were trading in. The following example is from the account book of Hovhannes at the end of the century. For clarity the words in Armenian are italicized as well as underlined. The words in Persian are simply italicized.

Here is a partial list of the goods he sells in which neither spices nor precious stones nor cloth are included although they do constitute the larger part of his commerce: *Utu*: iron for ironing cloth, *Torn*: fish net, *Tamk dziu*: horse saddle, *Mom*: candle wax, *Mekh yerKate*: metal nails, *Danak*: knife, *Ghufl*: lock, *Jezma*: slippers, *Kaghtsreghen*: confectionary sweets, *Aloor*: flour, *Ambravi Kezez*: date kernels.⁵⁵ Silk and cloth are of course called by their Persian names, such as *Bafte* for cotton cloth. Cotton, however, is called *Banpak* which is in Armenian. There seems to be a rule with a few exceptions that all manufactured goods have Persian names. To cite any silks or cotton or woolen cloths would mean a list of their names in Persian. This is not surprising as they were manufactured in Persia. Neither is it surprising that there are no Armenian names for the many qualities of silks and cloths manufactured in Persia. Most household words, such as those referring to foods, are in Armenian.

⁵⁵ The list of goods as well, as the weights and measures, in the account book have been deciphered and translated into Armenian by H. Papazian. There is a long dictionary added at the end of the published manuscript of the account book. Although a small excerpt of the translations can be found in the articles in French or English, most of it remains untranslated although it would be of great value to anyone interested in the trade of the Indian ocean.

Other items, such as the horse saddle and the fishing net, are common objects of daily life. Not all items of daily life have Armenian names, such as a lock, *ghufl*, which has a Persian name. Merchant accounts are a list of weights and measures and prices which are of course in Persian. This is natural as Persian is the local language of trade.

This observation is made amply clear in the next chapter where only Persian words appear in the account book, on obligations and merchant contracts. Words such as *barāt* (obligation), *amānat* (collateral), *yak gūsha* (one-sided). The sources we judge the language by are merchant sources. The two languages of the trading world of the Indian ocean were Portuguese (*lingua franca* in India even in the late seventeenth century) and Persian.

Using a written text of the same period would be misleading as it would not be in dialect but in classical Armenian. The Armeno-Latin dictionaries published in France, one under Richelieu, the other under Colbert, might be the best sources for comparison.⁵⁶ It would require a study in itself as well as a great amount of discernment. Having consulted the Armeno-Latin dictionary written by Petis de la Croix, a good amount of Turkish influence is discernible as the French often met with the New Julfans in Turkey as well as with other Armenians of the Ottoman Empire. It would be improper to think of those dictionaries as a source for commercial or non-commercial terms proper to Julfa. The Armeno-Latin dictionary at the Bibliothèque nationale also had hand made annotations about the Armenian religion.⁵⁷

It is difficult to know how persianized a dialect the Armenians spoke at home, as opposed to the language they used for trade. It would therefore be more correct to

⁵⁶Bibliothèque nationale, Fond Arménien: Catalogue établi par F. Macler:

1) Dictionnaire des Commerçans François et Latin, manus. 263

2) Dictionarius Armeno-Latinum, manus. 264

3) Dictionnaire François-Arménien vulgaire, manus. 262.

⁵⁷We are preparing an article describing the dictionary written by Pétis de la Croix.

conclude on the hypothesis that Persian was a trade language for the Armenians. This would explain the celerity with which it is adopted after the deportations from Armenia.

In the next chapter there will be talk of *tomans* and large sums of money. To form an idea of the scale of the amounts it is lucky that we can compare them to a few prices in New Julfa from the beginning of the century. The *toman* was for counting; money circulated in the form of *shāhīs* and *‘abbāsīs* and smaller pieces. A *liter* of bread (a *liter* here is probably the *liter ajamsatana*, or *liter shāhī*,⁵⁸ is the equivalent of 1280 miskals, or 5kg 800gr) cost 2 *shāhīs*, flour was worth 2 and a half *shāhīs*, oil was worth 24 *shāhīs*, rice was worth six *shāhīs* a *liter*.⁵⁹ One toman was worth 50 *shāhīs* at beginning of the century.⁶⁰ A *toman* was equivalent of 1000 *dian*. The devaluation of the end of the century had changed the figures for silver content.⁶¹ A large extended family could live on fifty *tomans* a year. A *toman* bought approximately 320 pounds of bread.

⁵⁸See the lexicon at the end of the account book of Hovhannes, and: Levon Kachikian, registre, p. 270.

⁵⁹Ter Yovhancanc', Vol. I, p. 92.

⁶⁰Niels Steensgaard, *Carracks, Caravans and Companies: The Structural Crisis in the European-Asian Trade of the Early Seventeenth Century*, (Copenhagen: 1973).

⁶¹A *toman* abstractly was worth 27 shahijani [roupie], or 370 dian. The *toman* at that time was worth 306,4 gr. of silver, so a *dian* was worth 0,03gr. of silver. See: Khachikian, *Registre*, p.267.

CHAPTER IV: MERCHANT ORGANIZATION

I. THE ARMENIAN FACTOR

They improved the Glory of Spahaun by their unwearied Industry, there being many of them Credible Merchants at this time, encountered worth at an hundred thousand *Thomand* (each *Thomand* being Three Pound and a Noble); so mightily do they increase under this Umbrage, in Riches and Freedom; for whilst they sit lazily at Home, their factors abroad in all parts of the Earth return to their Hives laden with Honey.¹

In the passage quoted above the traveller John Fryer has captured the essence of the methods of conducting commerce at New Julfa. “Whilst they lazily sat at home” describes the *khojas*. It is an accurate description; the *khojas* put up the money for a transaction but they neither carried it out themselves nor travelled for commerce. Travel and commercial activity was the domain of the factor. The activity of these factors is aptly compared to bees working all over the earth to collect honey. The factors alone faced the dangers of the road, and, as it will be demonstrated further, they also bore the entire responsibility for all negotiations. It is difficult to ascertain the origin of the appellation *khoja* for these very wealthy merchants. The Armenian merchants seem to have made use of the old aristocratic title of *baron* amongst themselves.² *Baron* is in general use today; it can be simply translated as “mister.” There is proof however that it was current usage to refer to them as *khoja*, or “*Cogee*,” during the seventeenth century:

¹John Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia, in eight letters...being nine years of Travels begun in 1672 and finished in 1681*, London 1698, reprint Delhi 1985, p. 268.

²Ter Yovhancanc' uses the term several times when enumerating what he finds in the Julfa archives.

The crowding multitude press for admittance, scarcely affording priority to the Wealthy Merchant; the most Honourable of whom are the *Armenians*, therefore styled *Cogee*, or Rich by the *Persians*, though even among the *Persians* many covet to be so reputed, but care not to measure the Wide World, like them, venturing no farther than over to India which is for them the *ne plus ultra*, while the diligent *Armenian*,

*Per mare per Terras, per quod tegit omnia, Caelum.*³

There are two sources which confirm that this *khoja* and factor association was a organized, codified, conscious system common to the Armenian merchants across the world. There is an account book by a factor from New Julfa⁴ which will be used as a main source here, but there is in addition a more general source which was not accessible, as it is preserved in the Republic of Armenia. The account book of Hovhannes, mentioned above, contains precious information on eleven years of commerce in India and Tibet. It is an invaluable, and unfortunately unique, example of the kind of ledger or legal register⁵ kept by the Armenian factors abroad.

Until the appearance of the account book of Hovhannes, little was known about these factors, save the few descriptions in travel accounts. The manuscript of the account book of Hovhannes of Julfa, or Hovhannes Jułaec'i, is preserved in Lisbon. There are no details available as to how it arrived there. It was studied, annotated and published for the first time in 1984 in Erevan. Its publication is a major milestone, as it is a unique source for the trade history of the time. It offers precise information on the accounting system used by the factors, the merchandise bought and sold, the travel routes east of Persia (in this case India and Tibet), moneys, methods of payment, interest rates, as well as some insight into the factor's daily life and

³John F-ryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia, in eight letters...being nine years of Travels begun in 1672 and finished in 1681*, London 1698, reprint Dehli 1985, p. 388.

⁴L. S. Xačikyan, and H. P'apazyan, *Hovhannes Ter-Davt'yan Jułayec'u Hašvetumara*. [The Account Book of Hovannes Ter- Davt'yan of Julfa.] Erevan: 1984.

⁵There is a *rūznāmah*, or "account book" kept by one of the Lazarians in the 18th century. It has not been published.

motivations. Hovhannes himself was a factor for a rich merchant of New Julfa and travelled to further his own business interests as well as those of his master. He in turn had several servants in his service. He kept close accounts for travel expenses such as food and clothing. His account register is also a unique source of information on the number and nature of taxes levied on merchandise, as well as for the different kinds of officers in charge of tax assessment in different regions.

The manuscript of this account book is No. GG 7970 of the National Library of Portugal; it exists as forty-four detached folios. These pages are 18cm wide and 54cm long, therefore extremely narrow, as paper customarily was in Tibet and Far East.⁶ The accounts are kept on these pages, recto-verso, for the eleven years from 1682-1693. As stated above, Hovhannes was at the service of a wealthier merchant, and the details of that contract are given at the beginning of his *rūznāmah*.⁷

In addition to Hovhannes' account book there is another source for merchant organization. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to consult it directly. That unique source is an eighteenth-century code of laws which embodies the rules of Armenian commerce. It was composed by the merchants of Astrakhan in 1765 in order to codify, in writing, what had been customary practice for the decades preceeding it.⁸ It is preserved in Erevan in manuscript form, and has been consulted by Levon Xaç'ikyan, one of the editors of the account book of Hovhannes mentioned above. The terms of the contract between a *khoja* and a factor can be found clearly

⁶Levon Khacikyan, "Le registre d'un marchand Armenien en Perse, en Inde et au Tibet (1682-1682), Annales (22ieme annee, mars-avril 1967, no2), p. 233.

⁷It seems that the common name in the Persian language for journal or a book kept on a daily basis, was the term chosen by the Armenian merchants for their account books. There is another example that confirms this the eighteenth century Lazarian Rouznama kept at the Matenadaran, mention of which is found in: Xaç'ikyan, Š. L. *Nor Julayi hay vajarakanut'yunə ev nra arevratntesakan kaperə rusastani het XVII ev XVIII dərərur.* [The Merchants of New Julfa and their commercial ties with Russia in the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries.] Erevan: 1988.

⁸There is a source confirming that it was custom at the end of the seventeenth century and earlier. Passages in Jean Baptiste Tavernier quoted here a little further confirm this, since he was writing in the latter half of the seventeenth century, see footnote 11

described in the general terms of customary law in the *Canons of True and Established Law*, referred to here as the Astrakhan Canons.

According to the Canons, the factor is termed an ‘associate’, and the *khoja* is referred to as the *āghā*. The following presents the terms outlined in article 11 of Chapter XIV called “*Of the Rights of the Merchants*.”⁹

- The associate is bound to keep a legal register where all transactions should be transcribed at their correct date and honestly.
- If an associate fails to present his register to his master, he will be imprisoned, fed bread and water, eventually whipped, and this for a period that could extend to a year.
- The associate is bound to return upon the request of the *āghā* at the time of his request. If he fails to do so, all his profits be they what they may belong to the *agha*, and all his losses are his sole responsibility.

This evidence vividly demonstrates that the code was a quite strict and one-sided contract, and a venture fraught with personal risks for the factor executing the contract. The factors alone faced the dangers and hardships of travel on the routes to Europe and to India.¹⁰ It seems evident that these canons merely codified customary rules and practices, so one can safely assume that what they specify in article 11 as the rules of a factor’s contract is valid for earlier decades. A description by Tavernier of these factors at the end of the 17th century offers proof for this assumption.¹¹ He

⁹Maštoc Madenadaran Ms. no 73 83.p. 57. All this can be found in the introduction to the published manuscript of Hovhannes, we have not had access to this source and we rely here on Xačikyan and P’ap’azyan’s work in Armenia.: Xačikyan, L. S. and P’ap’azyan, H. *Hovhannes Ter-Davt’yan Julayec’u Hašvetumarə. [The Account Book of Hovhannes Ter-Davt’yan of Julfa.]* Erevan: 1984, or in the article in French mentioned in footnote 2.

¹⁰We will make precise later that the terrestrial route was one favored by the Armenian merchants, and travel by boat was far less common.

¹¹Clear evidence for this is found in Tavernier: “But when they do not take care of their deals well, they don’t go back to Isphahan because it is a place where one must render exact account and where a good and swift justice is applied, the blows of the stick are not missing for the factors who have not managed the goods of their masters.” The original reads “Mais quand ils ne font pas bien leurs affaires, ils ne reviennent plus a Isphahan, parce que c’est un lieu ou il faut rendre compte exactement et ou l’on rend aussi bonne et courte justice, les coups de bâton ne manquant point aux facteurs qui ont mal ménagé le bien de leur maître.”

will be quoted in full a little further; suffice it to say here, that according to Tavernier any factor who went astray in his duties or failed in some manner did not dare set foot in Isphahan.

As Tavernier's case makes evident there are sources that yield corroborating information on the life of the factors: namely, the Europeans who travelled to Persia in the second half of the seventeenth century. In addition to the Europeans there is one Armenian who travelled to Amsterdam and kept a diary in which there are several passages that are extremely informative. That merchant, Zacharia of Akoulis, starts his diary in 1654.¹² While he does precede the time frame set for this study by a few years, nonetheless the number of years are so few that an exception was made to include the important information he offers.

The thrifty Armenian merchants, described in several passages by Tavernier and John Fryer, are these very same factors whom he met both on the roads and in major commercial centers like Smyrna. His account predates the Hovhannes' register by about twenty years. Tavernier's last arrival in Isphahan, on his way to India, takes place in 1664, and it takes him several years to get back to Paris. Among the travellers he is the most precise and prolific in his depiction of the Armenian merchants he encounters:

Commerce is great in Smyrna, and the main merchandise that the Franks come to remove are the raw silks that the Armenians bring from Persia; threads and camelots of goat hair that come from a small town named Angouri¹³ fifteen or sixteen days away from Smyrna; cotton thread, leathers and cords, marocins of several colors, white or blue cotton cloths, quantities of wools for mattresses, carpets or blankets, soap, rhubarb, and various dyes as well as opium....Habitually the caravans arrive here in February, June and October and go back from where they came the same months. The merchants who are for the most part Armenians prefer selling their merchandise to the French rather than to the other nations of Europe because they pay in cash as opposed

¹²Zacharia of Akoulis, *Diary*, Erevan 1938.

¹³Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Les Six voyages en Turquie et en Perse*, Paris Maspero 1981, p. 141. It is the city Ankara.

to the English or the Dutch who require them to taking half of their payment in cloth.¹⁴

Of course, these merchants must have had significant incentives of their own to brave all the dangers inherent in the long journeys that they undertook. Hovhannes Ter Davtian of Julfa, one such factor, provides us with a description of the financial realities of a factor's life. His register begins with the following paragraph:

In Jougha, suburb of Isphahan, the 22nd of the month of Hamira 1131 (63 Azaria style)—that is in 1682—I have entered into an association, receiving from the Khojas Zakaria and Embroom agha, son of Guerak, a capital total of 250 tomans. God willing I will take this sum to India to commerce there, the three fourths of the profits (not counting the capital) will go by the will of God to my masters; the remaining quarter will be mine, me Hovhannes. May God keep the dangers away from me. Amen.¹⁵

Here Hovhannes makes clear his incentive: one fourth of the total profit. The term *khoja* does not appear in the Armenian contracts. When it is found, it is as part of a name, as in the example above. John Fryer may have been correct as to the determination that it was used by the Persians to refer to the Armenian merchants.¹⁶ In Armenian, the *khoja*, or merchant, lending the capital, was called *āghā* and technically referred to as the *varkatour*. The terms of the contract are clear—most of the profit goes back to the investor, the *varkatour*. The factor, or associate (called

¹⁴Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Les Six voyages en Turquie et en Perse*, Paris Maspero 1981, Tome I, p. 141. We have used the most recent French edition of Tavernier here and have made our own translation, there is no English translation of this passage available. "Le commerce est grand à Smyrne et les principales marchandises que les Francs y viennent enlever sont les soies crues que les Arméniens apportent de Perse; des fils et des camelots de poils de chèvre qui viennent d'une petite ville appelé Angouri a quinze ou seize journées de Smyrne; du coton filé, des cuirs et des cordons ou maroquins de plusieurs couleurs, des toiles de coton blanches et bleues, quantité pour des matelas des tapis, des couvertures piqués, du savon de la rhubarbe, des noix de galle, de la valenede, de la scamonée et de l'opium:....Les caravanes arrivent d'ordinaire en cette ville au mois de février, de juin et d'octobre, et partent pour les pays d'ou elles viennent dans les mêmes mois. Les marchands qui sont la plupart arméniens, aiment mieux vendre leur marchandise aux Français plutôt qu'aux autres nations d'Europe, parce que ils payent tout en argent, au lieu que les Anglais et les Hollandais les oblige a prendre une moitié de leur payement en draps.

¹⁵Levon, Khachikcan, *registre*, p. 233.

¹⁶See quotation above, footnote 3.

enker), was referred to in contracts as the *varkarou*.¹⁷ The latter went to great lengths to augment his own profit of one fourth by keeping the general profit high and and operating overhead as low as possible. Consequently they were renowned for their thrift and economy on the road:

The Armenians are even better suited for commerce that they live with great economy and are very thrifty as I have said, either by virtue or because of avarice. When they leave their homes for long journeys, they make provision of biscuits, wine and dried fruits. They buy fresh meat only on the days they are permitted to have some only when they find some cheap lamb or kid in the mountains, and there is none among them that does not carry his net in order to fish when they find a river or a pond. All these provision cost them little in carriage; because as I have said before a merchant who has six camels of merchandise has one free to transport his provisions and luggage....When they get to a town where they must sojourn they get together, five or six of them and rent an empty room that they have soon furnished, each having carried his mattress, blanket, and house utensils, which is assuredly a great saving.¹⁸

The travellers, especially Tavernier, remain an unrivalled source for the daily life of these merchants. Being an account book, the *rūznāmah* is nearly devoid of any description of the mundane affairs of life on the road. There are, however, several episodes that include descriptive observations. Among these is an account of litigation in which Hovhannes was embroiled in Lhasa, Tibet. The litigation was solved in the local fashion by a toss of the dice. The recording of these episodes exists as explanatory notes for his masters back in Isphahan. In this respect, the

¹⁷There are examples of their contracts in: Xačikyan, Š. L., *Nor Julayi hay vajarakanut'yunə ev nra arevratntesakan kapərə iusastani het XVII ev XVIII dərərur*. [*The Merchants of New Julfa and their commercial ties with Russia in the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries.*] Erevan: 1988, p. 121.

¹⁸Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Les Six voyages en Turquie et en Perse*, Paris Maspero 1981, Tome II, p. 151. Translation my own. Here is the original;

"Les Arméniens sont d'autant plus propres pour le négoce qu'ils vivent de grande épargne et sont fort sobre comme j'ai dit, ou par vertu ou par avarice. Quand ils sortent de leurs maisons pour de long voyages, ils font provision de biscuit, de vin, et de fruits secs. Ils n'achète de viande fraîche qu'aux jours qu'il leur est permis d'en manger que lorsqu'ils trouvent dans les montagnes quelque agneaux ou chevreaux à bon marché, et il ny'en a guère d'entre eux qui ne porte leur filet pour pêcher quand ils trouvent des étangs ou des rivières. Toutes ces provisions leur content peu de voiture; car comme je l'ai remarqué ailleurs, un marchand qui charge six chameaux de marchandises en a un septième qui ne lui coute rien pour porter toutes ses provisions et son bagage....Quand ils sont arrivés à une ville ou ils doivent faire quelque séjour, ils se mettent cinq ou six ensemble et louent une chambre vide qu'ils ont aussitot meublé, chacun portant son matelas et sa couverture et ses ustensils de ménage, ce qui est assurément une grande épargne."

travellers are not taken seriously often enough as sources, even though they are at times very informative and accurate in their depictions. For example, Tavernier precisely confirms what the Astrakhan canons state as law decades later:

For they do not only go to Europe, but run to the depths of Asia, the Indies, Tonkin, to Java, the Philippines, and in all of the Orient, to the exception of China and Japan. But when they do not deal their affairs well, they do not go back to Isphahan, because it is a place where one has to give exact accounting and where a good and short justice is applied, the blows of the stick are not rare for the factors who have not well spared the goods of their masters.¹⁹

The account book of Hovhannes of Julfa yields information that makes even clearer the incentives these factors might have had to risk the dangers of the road and the submission to the power of a *khoja* potentially suspicious of their accounts.

In fulfillment of his contract as a factor, Hovhannes left New Julfa at the service of two *khojas* in mid december of 1682, to go to India and sell cloth. Four years later, in Surat he entered into a new association with a certain Hovhan of Shiraz, who was absent but was represented by his own factor Avedik, to go to Tibet. What is interesting here is that in this contract Hovhannes uses his own capital. At that point he possessed the money gained as his profit from the arrangements with his initial masters. Though no longer a penniless factor, it remains clear that despite this new contract he is still entirely at the service of his original masters in Isphahan. This is also the case for Hovhan of Shiraz who is a factor for a *khoja* in New Julfa as well. To transport goods to Tibet they in turn engaged servants of their own. This example affords a clear picture of the many layers an association might have.²⁰ Another

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 150. If the beginning of this quotation sounds very familiar it is because the information in it was appropriated by Braudel, and every article ever written in France on the Armenian merchant cites him. The end of this quotation which is much more informative is always omitted, probably because it is less glamorous. "Car ils ne vont pas seulement en Europe, mais ils courent jusqu'au fond de L'Asie, aux Inde á Tonquin, á Java, aux Philippines, et par tout l'Orient, á la reserve de la Chine et du Japon. Mais quand ils ne font pas bien leurs affaires, ils ne reviennent plus a Isphahan, parce que c'est un lieu ou il faut rendre compie exactement et ou l'on rend aussi bonne et courte justice, les coups de bâton ne manquant point aux facteurs qui ont mal ménagé le bien de leur maitre."

²⁰L. Xačikyan, p. 19.

source confirms that the contract into which he entered in Isphahan, for one quarter of the profit, was customary:

On which account it is the Armenians being skilled in all the intricacies and subtleties of trade at home, and travelling with these into the remotest kingdoms, become by their own Industry, and by becoming Factors of their own Kindreds Honesty, the Wealthiest men....They are a kind of privateer in Trade, no Purchase, no Pay: they enter the Theatre of commerce by means of some Benefactor, whose money they adventure upon, and on Return, a quarter part of the gain is their own: from such beginnings do they raise sometimes great Fortunes, for themselves and Masters."²¹

This passage has been quoted quite often for a single sentence omitted above:

"[the Armenians] will travel for fifty shillings where we cannot for fifty Thomands."²² The essential information it conveys on the one-fourth margin of profit for the factor is always left out as unworthy of interest. Despite the fact that the travel accounts can provide extremely accurate information, they have remained largely unexploited, save to highlight their often extreme and summary descriptions of national characteristics. Passages describing the Armenian merchant's thriftiness have attracted much attention, but they should not to be attributed to national character. The profit of the merchants (in fact the agents for wealthier merchants) encountered enroute by the travellers was directly augmented if they spent less of the capital they were provided. Most of them set out with nothing of their own. The careful and successful factor had, however, a very real opportunity to prosper.

There is no comparison possible between them and the rich European merchants that encountered and described them: Tavernier was a prosperous jeweller, son of a prosperous map merchant from Antwerp. His portrait by Largilliere shows a portly, well-fed man dressed in Persian garb. His robes are of gold brocade, his coat is lined with precious furs. His vision of the Armenian factors was that of a well-established

²¹John Fryer, *A new Account of East India and Persia, in eight letters...being nine years of Travels begun in 1672 and finished in 1681*, London 1698, reprint Dehli 1985, p.264.

²²*Ibid.*

wealthy man. The descriptions of the lifestyle of the *khojas* of New Julfa more than confirm that thrift was not a national virtue. Once a factor prospered he stayed home in New Julfa and began to provide capital to other factors. There are descriptions of sumptuous houses and of long hours of feasting in New Julfa in these same sources.²³ Not all of the factors made their fortune; the dominance of certain merchant families for over a century in New Julfa confirms that the best and fastest way to make money was to have money.²⁴ Despite this, there was some social fluidity and the prospect of prosperity if one was willing and able to undertake the arduous and risky occupation of travelling. In no other way can be explained the undisputed prosperity of an uprooted people, deprived of their houses and goods by the Persians seven decades earlier.

The wealth of a New Julfa merchant was estimated neither by the goods he owned nor by his house and its furnishings but by his capital alone. The amount of his capital represented the the potential by which that very wealth could be augmented by future ventures:

They are so well advanced in commerce that several of them have left behind from two thousand to twenty thousand tomans. But the most powerful who has appeared among the Armenians is called Cotgia Petrus (Cotgia means *Monsieur* or *Seigneur*)²⁵, he left at his death forty thousand tomans of moneyed silver, without accounting for his houses, his country possessions, his jewelery, his table settings of gold and silver and his rich furniture. Because in Persia, neither the Mahometans nor the Christians count among the riches of a merchant his furniture his houses, his lands, but only the cash money available for commerce."²⁶

²³Tavernier and Fryer as well as Chardin. An example is: Fryer, John. *A new Account of East India and Persia, in eight letters...being nine years of Travels begun in 1672 and finished in 1681*. London 1698, reprint Debli, 1985, p. 269.

²⁴For this purpose a reading of any family history in Ter Yovancanc' clarifies the situation. The wealthiest families at the beginning of the century are still the wealthiest ones at the end of the century.

²⁵This term is left untranslated because its English approximations are misleading.

²⁶Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Les Six voyages en Turquie et en Perse*, Paris Maspero 1981, Tome II. p. 151. The original reads:

This passage also confirms the usage of the title *khoja* to refer to the wealthy Armenians. Tavernier seems to understand the term to be no more than an honorific. The importance of cash capital for the Armenian merchants is further substantiated by their methods of conducting commerce. Before mentioning these, however, there is need for further precision as to the nature of the factor-*khoja* contract. Although the association for one fourth of the profit seems to have been customary as three sources confirm, there seems to have been other forms of associations.

Different Forms of Merchant Contracts

In the information found in the sources cited above it seems clear that one fourth of the profit as the share of the factor was the norm. It is twenty-five percent of the total net profit. This is clear in the account book of Hovhannes, and confirmed by both Fryer and Tavernier, as well as codified as law later in the Astrakhan Canons. This form of contract, which is amply discussed above, is between a merchant or merchants providing all of the initial capital, and the factors who provide none. These contracts were often exclusive. A factor at the service of a master could not work for anyone else. He could, however, as we saw in the case of Hovhannes in India, form new associations of his own with other merchants of his own rank. Contracts between factor and *khoja* were referred to in Armenian as *mekkolmani*, which means "one-sided."

There were other forms of contracts, however, for which no norm existed. These were called "two-sided" contracts, or in Armenian *erkoukolmani*. This type of

Mais le plus puissant qui ait paru de tous les Arménien, appelé Cotgia Petrus (Cotgia veut dire Monsieur ou Seigneur) laissa en mourant quarante mille touman d'argent monayé, sans compter ses maisons ni ses biens de campagne, ses pierreries ni sa vaisselle d'or et d'argent et ses riches meubles. Car en Perse, ni les mahométains ni les chrétiens ne comptent point entre les richesses d'un marchand ni les meubles, ni les maisons, ni les fonds de terre, mais seulement l'argent comptant pour négocier.

contract implied that all contracting parties provided capital for the venture. The percentages for profit varied greatly, and did not simply depend on the amount of capital an associate put in. These contracts were the contracts of individual associations among merchants or entire families of merchants for either one or several ventures. The terms of these contracts were redetermined each and every time among the associates.²⁷

Was there anything unique to the Armenians in these contractual forms? Some of the terms used by the Armenians such as *barāt*, *amānat*, *yak gūshah*, *dū gūshah*²⁸ are Persian terms which indicates that the contractual system they used was current in Iran. Chardin confirms that the system of sending factors out was common to all Eastern merchants:

The Eastern Merchants affect Grandure in Trading, notwithstanding they send their Deputies into all Parts, and stay at Home themselves, as in the Center of their grand Concern; they make no Bargains themselves directly, there is no publick place of exchange in their Towns; the Trade is carried on by Stock-jobbers, who are the subtilest, the cunningest, the slyest, the complaisantest, the patientest, and the most intriguing Men of the whole Society, having a valuable and insinuating Tongue beyond Expression: They are called *Delal*, which answers to Great Talkers, that Word being of a contrary Signification to *Lal*, i. e. Dumb. The *Mohametans* have a Proverb alluding to the Name of those Men, viz. That at the last Day, *Delal Lal*, the Stock-jobbers, or Talkers, will be Dumb; intimating that they will have nothing to say for themselves.²⁹

Therefore, the Armenian association between *khoja* and factor apparently was common to the area. When reading the travellers, especially Tavernier and Fryer who have so many references to Armenian merchants, one can't help but wonder about the existence of the Persian merchants, and their role in their own economy. When Chardin speaks of "Eastern" merchants later on in the same passage, it is clear he is

²⁷Š. Xačikyan, pp 121-136.

²⁸These terms are all discussed later in this chapter where they are translated and set into context.

²⁹Sir John, Chardin, *Travels in Persia 1673-1677*, New York: 1988, p. 280.

speaking of the Persian merchants as well of the Armenians and Indians. Still further he says that the Persian merchants did not carry out international trade, but traded locally. He adds that if they concerned themselves with foreign trade, they did not go to any other places but India. The next chapter will examine this question at length, but for the moment, the aim is to demonstrate that the Armenians did not have a unique system of association, or of merchantile contracts.

In seventeenth-century Europe, the system was very much the same, familiar to trade historians as a *Commenda*. The *Commenda* was mostly for maritime trade, since the trade of the Venetians or Genoans, as well as that of the French the British and the Dutch, was mainly maritime. It is, however, essentially the same system; the rich Venetian merchant remains at home, while his factors manage his affairs abroad. The European Companies of the seventeenth century also used this very system. The shareholders stayed in Amsterdam, London, Paris or Lyon and let merchants of lesser financial importance, not to mention fortune hunters of all kinds, run their errands. Nonetheless, some aspects of their accounting and bargaining methods were quite unheard of in Europe:

Tis very curious to see them make Bargains: After they have Argued and Discoursed a while before the Seller, and commonly at his own House, they agree with their Fingers about the Price: They take hold of one another's right Hand under a Cloak or Handkerchief, and entertain one another in that manner; the strait Finger stands for Ten, the bent Finger for Five: the Finger end for One; the whole Hand for a Hundred; and the Fist for a Thousand. Thus they denote Pounds, Pence, and Farthings, with a Motion of their Fingers: While they bargain they put on such a grave and steady Countenance, that 'tis impossible to know in the least either what they think or say.³⁰

³⁰*Ibid.*

The Merchant's Formation.

The one document describing the formation of a young merchant that does not concern New Julfa is the diary of the merchant Zacharia of Akoulis. Akoulis is in Armenia, in the valley of the Araxe river. Zacharia's beginnings are clear in his diary: He starts working under the supervision of an uncle, transporting goods belonging to his own father.³¹ He makes no money of his own this way. To embark on his own venture he borrows money from a related family. As soon as he makes enough money, he lends some to his brother-in-law who wants to trade in Tabriz. The story of the Lazarian family, on the other hand, exemplifies the life of a merchant family of New Julfa. The details of their mercantile practices can be found in Ter Yovhaneanc' and have been further analyzed by Š. Xačikyan. Both authors point in the direction of family associations but spend little or no time analyzing the advancement of an individual merchant.

Just what kind of training was available to a young Armenian boy is not altogether clear. The evidence seems to indicate that a young man was educated in commercial practices by the older members of his family. There is, however, some evidence suggesting the existence of a school for merchants in New Julfa, taught by a certain merchant by the name of Konstand. This is mentioned by Ter Yovhaneanc', based on information culled from the New Julfa archives where he found references to a manual composed by Konstand. He speaks of 250 students having graduated from a school where they are taught arithmetic, reading, bookkeeping, and the rules of commerce from commercial manuals.³² In fact, there is just such a manual still in existence. It is not by Konstand whose known work is devoted to the art of

³¹Zacharia, Akoulesc'i, *Diary*, Erevan: 1938

³²Ter Yovhaneanc', volume II, p. 253.

Arithmetic. In 1699, a manuscript by a certain Łucas Vanandec'i was among the first Armenian works to be published in Amsterdam, on the Armenian printing press recently established there. Among other texts were the Bible and the history of Arak'el, which as we saw was a history of the Armenian deportation to New Julfa. The work of Łucas Vanandec'i³³ is a manual of weights and measures, as well as of currencies, written for the use of Armenian merchants involved in international trading. The *Ganj č'apoy, kšroy, t'woy, ew dramic' bolor asxarhi* (*Treasury of measures, weights, numbers and moneys of the whole world*)³⁴ contains information about itineraries, various taxes, and as its title indicates, the weights, measures and moneys of the world. Further reference is made to its contents in the next chapter for its contribution to knowledge of international trade. It suffices here to say that its existence is the sole evidence for the existence of any formal training outside the confines of the merchant family. It has among its sources two works by Konstand Jułaec'i himself, both devoted to arithmetic for the usage of merchants.³⁵ Only a consultation of what Ter Yovhaneanc' seems to have found in the Julfa archives could confirm the existence of a school.

That the family was the basic training group for a young apprentice merchant seems to emerge clearly from Ter Yovhaneanc' study of the families of New Julfa.

³³K. Kévonian, "Marchands arméniens au 17ième siècle." *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, 16, (1975): 199-244.

³⁴The exact title in Armenian is : Łucas Vanandec'i , *Ganj č'apoy, kšroy, t'woy, ew dramic' bolor asxarhi. Or ē gitut'win amenayn tesak č'apoc', ksroc', ew dramic' orov bolor ašxarhi vačarakanut'iwn vari. žolovyal ew i mi vwayr havak'al ašxatut'eamb Łukasu abašnorh jankali Vnandec'woy. Caxiwk ew i xndroy hayc'man hatc'man Jułayec'i Xač'aturi ordi Paron Petrosin. Tpiwk ew hawanut'camberamec' vehi Tomay vardapeti ew ew srbap'ayl episcoposi Vanandec'woy Tann Golt'neanc'. yAmi teafn. 1699, yunvari 16. y Amsterdam. [A Treasury of measures, weights, numbers, and moneys of the whole world. Or knowledge of all sorts of weights, measures and moneys that rule the commerce of the whole world. Assembled and collected within the same work by the work of Lucas of Vanand. At the expense and request of Peter son of Khatchadour of Julfa, published under the direction of the sublime doctor bishop Thomas of Vanand of the house of Golt'n in Amsterdam in the year 1699 on January 16].*

³⁵See: Kévonian, Keram. *Marchands Armeniens au XVIIIième siècle*.

To a historian like Ter Yovhaneanc' the family system seems so evident he doesn't even point out the fact. It was a succession of sons and nephews sent here and there to tend to affairs of their uncles or fathers. This is not unusual; Jean Baptiste Tavernier took his nephew along on his last trips to Persia to initiate him into the art of commerce, and to introduce his successor to the court.

The Accounting System

Hovhannes' account book is the only seventeenth century example of its kind available to us today. The accounting system used in it does not vary significantly from bookkeeping methods used by his European contemporaries. The double-entry system was widespread and familiar to merchants across the world. In the facsimile provided below, from the account book of Hovhannes. There are, however, several unusual symbols that draw attention. Fractions are marked in a singular fashion: / is $1/4$, // is $2/4$, /// is $3/4$. The addition of dots increases the value of the denominator by a factor of ten: ./ equals $1/40$, two dots ../ is $1/400$, and so on. Integers are represented by letters of the Armenian alphabet. This system was customary among the Armenians, except that the system used in this account book varies somewhat from the most widespread form. For example, instead of using the usual letter, 'Տ', for 500, he combines the letter for 5, 'Ե', and the letter for 100, which is Շ, giving ԵՇ. The system of dates used is a calendar specific to New Julfa, as discussed in the previous chapter. This style of numeration, as well as the calendar, is found in the few *rūznāmah* (daily account books) which come down to us from a little later in the eighteenth century.³⁶

³⁶Levon Xac'ik'yan, *registre*, p.275.


վերայ, Մուրելին ացի տես-
նու, ինչ և իցէ տաս, մինչև
ես գոմ Սուրաթն, մուղա-
թով և լընդիսվածովըն կը
տամ, ես գնացի:

Վերոյ է դալամին ջամէն բողձկե	Վերոյ ի զալամին ջամէն բողձկե III-
այ՝	այ՝

Էն ֆարտին ջամէն բերի դրի էս յիրեսումս որ էլաւ բողձկե	Էն ֆարտին ջամէն բերի դրի էս յիրեսումս, որ է- լաւ ջամէն՝ բողձկե III-
Նախայ ամսին իբ-ումն Բե- րամփոտումն յինք առի յա- րևանցի քաղումէն առանց թամասուկ, որ մին տեղ գնաման ինք Սրինճըն, Սրընճումն տամ, որ էլաւ ջամէն՝	Նախայ ամսին իա-ումն մտայ Բերամփոտում, Ծիրա- զայ եկեղեցում խմար ո- ղորմութիւն տվի Եօնէնց II Թարսոսին, որ է ջամէն՝ I Ղամարի ամսին ժր-ումն մտայ Սրինճըն, Օվրանկա- պատ ք օրէն ձիան խօրակ, մինչև Սրինճն ինձ և ձի- ան խարն գնաց, որ է ջա- մէն՝ II Մտայ Սրինճըն, խաղտ մնաց ինձ խետ քաղի, ջա- մէն՝ I

Վերոյ ք դալամին ջամէն բողձկե.	Վերոյ դ դալամին ջամէն բողձկե.
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Ղարշվին մնացեալ քարա- քաթ քաղին բերի ինձ Սը- րընճումն ջամայ բոնեցի, ջամէն՝ I	Փոքր թիվն կը անար ամսին ժե. էն թարեղ Սը- րընճումն Աղազարին ձեռ- նովն խրրաի ձեռ տվի, մինչև թիրայ ի տի քար- քաստի չանթի ընդ թան




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II. MODES OF REMUNERATION AND PAYMENT

Though received wisdom maintains that the Armenians merchants were intermediaries for other parties,³⁷ this generalization has been deduced solely from their position under Shah Abbas. The next chapters will examine the true character of their position and role, both politically and economically. First, however, there are some details of their trading practices that are of crucial importance to any assessment of their role. There is some evidence that has remained unnoticed which points to the contrary of the above perception. Several sources attest that Armenian merchants all over the world shared one very important characteristic in their transactions: they sold against cash, not against other goods. There are several testimonials to this. Tavernier, as quoted earlier, states clearly that the Armenians preferred to trade with the French at Smyrna, because the French would pay them in currency, and did not require that they accept partial payment in goods.

The merchants who are for the most part Armenians prefer selling their merchandise to the French rather than to the other nations of Europe because they pay in money as opposed to the English or the Dutch who obligate them to taking half of their payment in cloth.”³⁸

³⁷This is implied or clearly stated in many general works not specifically dealing with the Armenians. The list is too long to cite here. Recently this misconception has been both amplified and swept aside without explanation in a study which devotes an entire chapter to the Armenians: Curtin, Philip D. *Cross Cultural Trade in World History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. When speaking of the Armenians under Safavid rule Curtin states “This new base, and the Shah’s patronage, gave the New Julfa Armenians an opportunity to further their own commercial interests by helping the shah with his. It is, as in this case, most often implied that they served the Persian court. Later at the end of the seventeenth century the question of their cooperation with England or with France comes up and is generally upheld. See: Ferrier, R. W “The Agreement of the East India Company with the Armenian Nation 22nd of June 1688.” *Revue des études arméniennes.*, 7(n.s.) (1970): 427-43, and Ferrier, R. W. “The Armenians and the East India Company in Persia in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries,” *The Economic History Review*, second series, XXVI, 1 (February 1973): 38-62.

³⁸Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Les Six voyages en Turquie et en Perse*, Paris Masson, 1981 Tome I, p. 141. We have used the most recent French edition of Tavernier here and have made our own translation, as there is no English translation of this passage available. The original reads: “Les marchands qui sont la plupart arméniens, aiment mieux vendre leur marchandise aux Français plutôt qu’aux autres nations d’Europe, parce que ils payent tout en argent, au lieu que les Anglais et les Hollandais les obligent à prendre une moitié de leur payement en draps.”

He does not say that they refused to sell to the English or the Dutch, but says they preferred the French “parce que ils paient tout en argent.” The question as to why there existed this difference between the French and the Dutch and English merchants will be addressed later. Here it is important to concentrate on the Armenian side of these arrangements. Archival evidence preserved in the Amsterdam municipal archives confirms this insistence on cash payment:

...that it is customary among Armenian or Persian merchants never to sell otherwise than against cash payment. Giving for the reasons of his knowing this that he sold his merchandise for cash money on two occasions and never saw any Armenian or Persian goods being sold otherwise than for cash.³⁹

This evidence, found in notarial papers, is the testimony of one Armenian merchant Gregorio,⁴⁰ whose original name one may guess was Grigor, on behalf of his compatriot Theodat. It is much more affirmative than the evidence offered by Tavernier. Gregorio affirms that he never saw any Armenian or Persian goods sold against other goods, only for cash.

This is extremely significant testimony. It directly implies that the Armenians only sold to the Europeans against cash remuneration, and did not accept European goods in exchange, which would have made them *de facto* intermediaries for the

³⁹This was found in the Municipal Archives of Amsterdam, in the notarial papers that have been studied and classified under Armeniaca by the present vice archivar, Doctor Simon Hart. The above information and quotation is no 13.3.1656 it is to be found translated in: Van Rooy, Silvio. "Armenian Merchant Habits as Mirrored in the 17-18th Century Amsterdam Documents." *Revue des études arméniennes*, 3 (n.s.) (1966):347-357, p. 350. The original reads as follows:

“Dat onder ‘Armenische ofte persiaensche cooplyuden noyt de manier is anders als voor contant te vercoopen. Gevende redenen van wetenschap tot twe reyse toe sijne coopmanschappen voor contante penningen vercoft te hebben ende noyt anders als voor contante eenige armenische ofte periaenische goederen te hebben sien vercoopen...”

⁴⁰It is most fascinating to note how many names are italianized among the seventeenth century merchants. Further on in this study much will be said about Marcara, whose original name was Marcar. He must have aquired that name in Livorno, which was a major center for Armenian trade. We have facts ascertaining that he came to Paris after residence in Livorno, but what of the merchants in the Amsterdam archives? We find certain first names are italianized, gallicized, or anglicized. There is a list to be found in the Van Rooy article stated above, all were in notarial papers in the Amsterdam Archives: Pierre Corros, Oan de Pannes, Joseph Anthony (it is not certain he was Armenian, but was referred to as an Armenian in several documents.), Badbagan Petro Balthasar, Michiel Panes, Goja Andon.

European merchants on their route back to Persia. This misconception of the Armenians as intermediaries is one of the most fundamental to be addressed. It has been repeatedly stated, without sufficient supporting evidence, that they were intermediaries, either for the Europeans, or for the Persian court or for both.⁴¹ Further on in this study, when their relationship to the Companies will be clarified, the fact that they only commerced for cash money will be raised again. It is clear from the sources that they bought European cloth or other goods to trade of their own free will with their cash, but that is quite different from accepting cloth as payment. To verify such details, which might yield important information as to their role, a list of what they traded is essential.⁴²

There is further evidence as to the importance of cash for the Armenians. Tavernier narrates that there were several mines of gold and silver in Iran, but that their exploitation was so profitless that it had given rise to a general expression for labor lost. There was a paucity of gold and silver in circulation in Iran and much hoarding. The Armenians played a very special and rather precious role from the perspective of the Persian court—they were the only source for gold and silver from Europe,⁴³ as Europe was Iran's main source of gold and silver, followed by India:

So all the gold and silver of Persia comes from foreign lands, and particularly from Europe, as I have said in the chapter on moneys. Since the reigh of Shah Abbas I to the reign of Shah Abbas II, one saw more silver in Persia than presently; and the Armenian merchants brought it from Europe to Persia where it was reduced to local money. But since a few years they only bring ducats and sequins as being more portable.⁴⁴

⁴¹See note 26 of this chapter.

⁴²In addition to the list given further in this chapter, a complete list of the merchandise cited in the account book is to be found in the appendix of the account book.

⁴³Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Les Six voyages en Turquie et en Perse*, Paris Maspero 1981, Tome II, p. 94.

⁴⁴*Ibid.* The original reads: "Ainsi tout l'or et l'argent de Perse vient des pays étrangers, et particulièrement de l'Europe comme je l'ai remarqué au chapitre des monnaies. Depuis le règne de

The significance of their being the single most important source for gold and silver for cannot be overestimated. This passage will be relied upon again in a discussion of trade relations with France, for there too it was well known that the Armenians traded strictly for cash. Several edicts which will be examined in detail further on were issued against Armenian trade during the course of the seventeenth century.⁴⁵ Some of them state very clearly that the Armenians cannot leave France carrying gold and silver. While the contents of these edicts have been noticed before,⁴⁶ it has never been interpreted as significant. It has been understood to be the vindictive result of religious strife between Catholic France and Apostolic Armenians, or as a proof of extensive Armenian commercial interests which might hurt local merchants. It makes better sense to recognize that the edicts mean what they state: that the Armenians should not bleed France of precious hard currency.

Tavernier additionally provides very important information on currency in Iran. He provides evidence that at the time silver prevailed in the economy:

It is noteworthy that firstly, that gold money is not coined in Persia save for when the kings come to the throne to make liberalities to the people and a few coins always remain in the Treasury. So that gold is not a current and circulating money. When the triumph is gone those who possess the coins do not have the curiosity of keeping them as we would medals, and they take them to the money changers who give them their value in current local cash. These gold coins can be worth five francs and are the weight of our German ducats.⁴⁷ ...Secondly, it has to be observed that all sorts of silver are good in Persia, in bars in silverware and in money, and it is taken for its weight.⁴⁸

Chah Abbas I jusqu'à celui de Chah Abbas II, on voyait plus d'argent dans la Perse qu'on le voit presentement; et les marchands arméniens l'apportaient de l'Europe en Perse ou on les réduisait en Monnaies du pays. Mais depuis quelques années, ils n'apportent plus que des ducats et des sequins comme étant des espèces plus portatives."

⁴⁵G. Rambert, *Histoire du Commerce de Marseille* Publié par la chambre de commerce de Marseille en sept Tomes, Paris: Plon 1953-1957. . Several passages that will be cited elsewhere attest to this. They are mostly in volume V.

⁴⁶By H. Kevorkian.

⁴⁷Tavernier, volume one, chapter XII, p. 190. The original reads: "Il faut remarquer en premier lieu, qu'on ne bat point de pièce d'or en Perse que lorsque les rois viennent au trône pour faire des libéralités au peuple, et il en demeure toujours quelques une au Trésor. Ainsi ce n'est point monnaie courante. Quand le triomphe est passé ceux qui ont des pièces n'ont pas la curiosité de les garder

Chardin confirms Tavernier's observation: "All Payements are made in Silver, Gold is not Current in trade."⁴⁹ There are other hints as to the importance of the Armenians in this major aspect of the Persian economy. All the silver that was coined with the king's effigy was brought in by foreign trade. There are references to the strict rules applied to currency in Iran, such as the following passage in Tavernier

As one is obliged in entering the kingdom, either in Erivan or in Tauris where currency is coined to declare all the silver one has for it to be melted and coined in the kings name, under penalty of a heavy fine for the countering parties if they are to be discovered. But if a merchants affairs do not permit him to stop either in Erivan or in Tauris, and it is more practical for him to take his silver to the mint in Isphahan, he can just take a bill from the master of the mint in Erivan or Tauris by which it is attested that he has duly made his declaration.⁵⁰

This single passage not only tells us that there were three mints at the time in Iran, but that all the silver entering the kingdom had to be recoinced with the king's effigy under penalty of a heavy fine for false declaration or failure to declare. It has already been established here that the Armenians were the main source of silver and gold for Iran. The European merchants who traded in Iran, such as Tavernier, might have conducted important trade deals, but their role was not significant because of two evident factors: first of all, their numbers were insignificant; second, they entered the country with goods (such as jewels in the case of Tavernier). They were there to sell their goods not to bring in currency from Europe.

comme nous garderions une medaille, et il les portent au changeur qui leur en rends la valeur en espèces courante du pays. Ces pièces peuvent valoir environ cinq francs et sont au titre de nos ducats d'Allemagne."

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 191. The original reads: "En second lieu, il faut observer que toute sorte d'argent est bon en Perse, en barre en vaisselle ou en monnaie, et on le prend pour son titre."

⁴⁹Sir John Chardin, *Travels in Persia 1673-1677*, New York 1988, p.284.

⁵⁰Tavernier, volume I, chapter XII, p. 191. The original reads: "Car on est obligé en entrant dans le royaume, soit a Erivan soit a Tauriz ou on bat monnaie, de declarer tout l'argent qu'on porte pour être fondu et battu au coin du roi, à peine d'une grosse amende aux contevenants si on peut les découvrir. Mais si les affaires d'un marchand ne lui permettent pas d'arrêter ni à Erivan ni à Tauris, et qu'il lui soit plus commode de porter son argent à la monnaie d'Isphahan, il n'a qu'à prendre un billet du maître de la monnaie d'Erivan ou de Tauris par lequel il atteste comme il a fait dument sa declaration."

There are references to the Armenians being mint masters and customs officers in charge of collecting the duties and tariffs. Luckily, several names of mint masters and customs officials are cited in a seventeenth century diary.⁵¹ According to Zacharia of Akoulis, the author of the diary who was writing in the middle of the seventeenth century, several Armenian mint masters succeeded each other at the mints of Tiflis and Erevan.⁵² His own brother, Šemavon, was the agent for the Khan of Erevan, which was not only one of the major tax collecting stations, but as was seen above, one of the stations where one had to give over all of one's silver to be recoined. Šemavon (Simon), his brother, was also at the head of the Erevan mint. From Zacharia's description, the office was a prosperous, profitable one, and the tenure of the office could be negotiated. His brother Šemavon kept his office longer than the Khan. He retained his office under Najaf Ghuli, Abbas Ghuli and Sefi Ghuli Khan.⁵³

The fact that the Armenians were the main source of the circulating silver currency of the time is as important and worthy of investigation as the silk trade. The fact that the officers in charge of collecting and minting the silver seem to be Armenian points to an important, unexplored domain both for Safavid history and for the role of the Armenians in the seventeenth century. Earlier studies have failed to comment on this important detail. Zacharia of Akoulis cites a few names only, but they offer a glimpse into a major new domain for investigation.⁵⁴ Unfortunately,

⁵¹Š. L. Xačikyan, *Nor Julayi hay vajarakanut'yuno ev nra arevratntesakan kaperə rusastani het XVII ev XVIII dərərur.* [The Merchants of New Julfa and their commercial ties with Russia in the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries.] Erevan: 1988, pp 121-136.

⁵²Zacharia Acoultsi, *Diary* Erevan: 1938.

⁵³Acoultsi, p. 81. See also: Xačikyan Susan, p. 191.

⁵⁴Such as a certain Armenian by the name of Khoja Behbad, head of the mint in Tiflis in 1647. Susan Xačikyan also lists the successors of his brother in Erevan: the mint was given to a certain Aghabeg in 1674 and a Sarkis khorageghtsi in 1679. The sources she used in Erevan are unavailable to us. She does not give clear references to them, for in Soviet academic works it was not customary to have a bibliography or complete footnotes.

access to material that could yield at least a partial list of mint masters would imply long research in the Erevan archives. Just how exclusive and vast their role was cannot be established until more information is available from the manuscripts and archives kept in the Matenadaran.

It is clear that the Armenians were the main source of currency for Iran. Still, it seems hardly conceivable, given the length of the journeys they undertook, or the peril on the roads they travelled, that they carried their money in the form of cash throughout the length of their journeys.

The Different Forms of the Letter of Credit

Evidence for the methods of payment employed can be found both in the travellers and in the account book of Hovhannes of Julfa. In the month of December of the year 1682, the merchant Hovhannes, son of the priest David, left New Julfa for a trip to India in the service of his two masters, Zakar and Embrom. He set out for Bandar Abbas with 738 meters⁵⁵ of red and green English cloth.⁵⁶ Hovhannes received from the sons of Khoja Guerak, his employers, in addition to the cloth, a letter of credit⁵⁷ against which a certain Baron Avetik would give him twenty-nine tomans in cash when he reached the city of Shiraz. In New Julfa he was given the relatively small sum of two *tomans* and 85,000 *dians*, one *toman* of which was to buy

⁵⁵The register says 18 pieces of narrow cloth red and green, 726 gaz and 6 greh. The measures in the register are of great interest in and of themselves. The equivalence in meters used above in our text was established by Xačikyan and P'ap'azyan in: Xačikyan, Š. L. and P'ap'azyan *Nor Julayi hay vajarakanut'yuna ev nra arevtratntesakan kaperə rusastani het XVII ev XVIII darerum.* [The Merchants of New Julfa and their commercial ties with Russia in the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries.] Erevan: 1984, p. 16.

⁵⁶*Ibid.* The term used for cloth is *angliakan mahout*.

⁵⁷The term used in Armenian is *mourhak*.

cloth to cover⁵⁸ the partial transport of the English cloth. Altogether, the English cloth, the letter of credit, and the cash constituted a capital advance of 250 *tomans*, that he was given to work with and increase in his dealings.⁵⁹

From this detailed information it is clear to see that he departed New Julfa with less than one tenth of his capital in liquid cash. Most of his capital was tied up in the English cloth: about seven eighths of it. The letter of credit for twenty-nine tomans is partly for travel and transport expenditures, but mainly for duties at the frontier. He did not carry sufficient cash at his point of departure to meet even the necessary expenditures, be it in Persia proper. He gets more cash in Shiraz along the way. His itinerary is as follows: New Julfa, Mehear, Yazdikhast, Shiraz, Lar, Bandar Abbas. When he left New Julfa on the 17th of December he was carrying only enough cash to reach Shiraz. He ultimately arrived in Bandar Abbas on the 6th of February, after a journey of 51 days.

From the beginning of his journey onwards, it becomes clear in the register that the letter of credit was the customary mode of payment in usage among the Armenian merchants.⁶⁰ This is not extraordinary for the regions in which Hovhannes intended to do business. Specialists of Indian economic history confirm that this method of payment had been customary in India since the reign of Akbar (1556-1605).⁶¹ As for Europe, it had also known the letter of credit since Medieval times. Though the Armenian merchants used this mode of payment across the world there is nothing specific to the Armenians in the way they employed it. As in other localities and communities, interest rates were changed according to the amount of risk the loaner

⁵⁸The term used to refer to the cover is a persian one: *varpous*

⁵⁹Տ. Xačikyan, 6.

⁶⁰Levon Xacikcan, p. 262.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, p. 260.

undertook. Another factor that affected the interest rates is more difficult to fathom: the degree of familial proximity between lender and borrower. A brother would have an advantage over a stranger.⁶²

Interest Rates

In their study of the register, Xaç'ikyan and P'ap'azyan have estimated the interest rate of the ordinary letter of credit used in India to be 0.75% per month. Their hypothesis as to why it always remained so low⁶³ is that the merchants who gave each other letters were all tied by the same expectations of profit, and were bound together by all manner of transactions within the same country. The letters of credit to which they specifically refer are between Armenian merchants in India.

They also note in the register several instances of monetary transactions without any receipts. Hovhannes gives a certain sum of money to an Armenian merchant named Baba, in one Indian city, on condition that Baba restitutes it in another Indian city with 0.75% monthly interest. Baba says to him "go and the receipt will be in Aurankapat," which was a third location still. The receipt was in Aurankapat upon Hovhannes' arrival. A little later Hovhannes reimburses his debt to a certain Manvel, even though Manvel has lost his receipt.⁶⁴

The interest rates were quite different if the loaner and the lender were to be in two different locations. If the lender had to take a trip to another country, there was a greater risk of loss. The greater the risk, the higher the interest. This type of

⁶²Š. L. Xaç'ikyan, p. 180.

⁶³We can confirm that this was a very low rate. In Europe the Bank of Amsterdam was considered to have low credit rates, it lent money during the same period at about 2%. See: H. I. Bloom, *The Economic Activities of the Jews of Amsterdam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Williamsport, Penna: 1937, p. 178.

⁶⁴*Ibid*, p. 262.

transaction is called *avak* in the account book. An ordinary letter of credit is called *mourhak*. A transfer of money is called *yendvi*.⁶⁵

It is now possible, thanks to the account book, and to the ten years of study devoted to it by Xac'ikyan and P'ap'azyan in Erevan, to form a clear image of the forms the transactions took, and of some of the interest rates in each case.

The Yendvi

The transfer of money was for the most part in the hands of professional money changers. The Persian *ṣarrāf* is the term used to refer to them in Hovhannes' account book. *Ṣarrāfs* each had their representatives in different cities. Tavernier provides important details about the state of money lending and transfers in Isphahan. By his account, it was an Indian specialty:

There are about ten or twelve thousand Banians or Indians in Isphahan....They are all like bankers and are very skilled, especially in the knowledge of moneys. Most of the money of the principals of Isphahan is in their hand for them to augment it. When one needs a considerable amount of money, one can have it by the next day, given sufficient collateral, and that one pays them high interest, that they sometimes make as high as 18%.⁶⁶

This passage gives an estimate of the lending rates possible in Isphahan.⁶⁷

Among Muslims there was a stigma attached to money lending and transferring for

⁶⁵These terms are found in the account book of Hovhannes. Their forms and interest rates are analyzed in the introduction to the account book.

⁶⁶Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Les Six voyages en Turquie et en Perse*, Paris Maspero 1981, Tome II, p. 155. The original reads: "Il y a environ dix ou douze Baniana ou Indiens à Isphahan on les connaît d'abord à leur teint basane, mais plus aisément à une marque jaune faite avec du safran sur le haut du front, laquelle ils portent par quelque principe de leur religion. Leur turban est plus petit que les turbans ordinaires et leur souliers sont à peu près fait comme les nôtres avec des fleurs en broderie par-dessus. Ils sont tous comme banquiers et sont fort adroits, surtout dans la connaissance des monnaies. La plus grande partie de l'argent des principaux d'Isphahan est entre leurs mains pour le faire valoir, et quand on a besoin d'une somme considérable, on peut l'avoir dès le lendemain, moyennant une bonne assurance, et qu'on leur paie de gros intérêts, qu'ils font quelque fois aller jusqu'à dix-huit pourcent."

⁶⁷Among the Jewish colonies in Amsterdam the rate seems to have been 12%. See: H.I. Bloom, *The Economic Activities of the Jews of Amsterdam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century*. Williamsport, Penna.: 1937.

profit. The laws of Islam strictly forbid all forms of usury. Additionally, nowhere is there any indication that there were any Armenian *şarrāfs*. The Banian changers had made banking their specialty, but they had to find their own methods of negotiating secretly:

But they [the lenders] have to pay secretly, because as the law of Mohamet forbids all interest, if justice has wind of this, the sum is immediatly confiscated.⁶⁸

While there are instances recorded where the Banians have gotten into trouble with the Persian authorities,⁶⁹ there are no known accounts of Armenians in trouble for usury. Apparently, they were not involved in the money lending trade, save amongst themselves for purposes of commerce. For the rest, the Armenians used the banking services of the Indian *şarrāfs*. In the account book, Hovhannes used their services on several occasions for the transfer of moneys before his departure from India to Tibet. The fees demanded for the service of transferring his money fluctuated in each case, according to both distance and risk. The rates found in his account book vary from 1% to 8%.⁷⁰

These are average rates compared to what is to be found elsewhere. In the Italian cities rates fluctuated between 8 and 12%. In seventeenth-century Russia they varied between 15 and 20%. In the France of Louis XIV the usual rates were between 5 and 6%.⁷¹ Anything higher was considered outrageous and punishable as usury. The rates in India, Iraq and Iran for money were on average 9%.⁷²

⁶⁸*Ibid.*

⁶⁹See an episode described by Tavernier, Volume I, book II, footnote 13.

⁷⁰Levon Xacikcan, Levon "Le registre d'un marchand Armenien en Perse, en Inde et au Tibet (1682-1682), Annales (22ieme annee, mars-avril 1967, no2), p.261.

⁷¹Colbert reformed the economy and enforced strict rules. It was up to 18% before his reforms.

⁷²Տ. Լ. Ճափկյան, Նոր Յուլայի հայ վաճառականության և նրա արևտրաճեսական կապերը Ռուսաստանի հետ XVII և XVIII դարերում. [The Merchants of New Julfa and their commercial ties with Russia in the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries.], (Erevan: 1988), pp155-57.

In these transactions three people were involved: the payer, in this case Hovhannes; the intermediary who transferred the money; and the person who received the money. Complicating matters for the historian, but simplifying matters for traders, *yendvis* were as endorsable as checks are today. In the account book there are several instances of the transfer of a *yendvi* to a merchant endorsed by other intermediary Armenian merchants.⁷³ In those instances, their intervention avoids the recourse to the *ṣarrāf*.

The Mouhak

The account book gives several instances of the usage of the ordinary letter of credit. In several instances Hovhannes both borrows and lends by means of this instrument. Xacikyan and P'ap'azyan have calculated the rates of these transactions. As mentioned before the rate is of a minimal 0.75%.per month This gives the average interest rate of 9% a year. For the letter of credit among Armenian merchants in the same country, tied together by commercial bonds, there seems to be one fixed low rate. By low rate one means the current rate of money in the regions in which the Armenians were negotiating. As said above, the rates in India, Iraq and Iran were an average of 9%. The *mouhak* is the term for this local letter of credit.

The use of checks was common both in India and Iran. The *mouhak* used by the Armenian merchants were endorsable as checks. It was referred to as *poxanc'aein mouhak*, "a transferable letter of credit."⁷⁴

⁷³*Ibid.*

⁷⁴Տ. Լ. Ճաճիկյան, Նոր Յուլայի հայ վաճառականության և նրա արևմտատեսական կապերը Ռուսաստանի հետ XVII և XVIII դարերում [The Merchants of New Julfa and their commercial ties with Russia in the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries.], (Erevan: 1988), p. 170

The Avak

The term *avak* refers to money borrowed from someone residing in another country. The simplest way to define it is to compare it to an international letter of credit, as opposed to an ordinary one which remained local. As mentioned before, the rates of this kind of loan were very high compared to the ordinary letter of credit. They took into account the dangers of the road and the risk of not being paid because of the distance.

On the 25th of April 1684 Hovhannes borrowed fifty roupies from Trikam, an intermediary, at the usual rate of 0.75. It appears however that he did not borrow it for his own commercial purposes, but with the intent of lending the money. He then lends Trikam's fifty roupies at a rate of 27% in an *avak* contract with the merchant Gaspar:⁷⁵

The 24th of the month of Shams I gave to Shambetsi Gaspar 50 roupies of *avak* at the interest rate of 27%. The profit comes to 13.5 roupies. The lent sum plus interest comes to 63.5 roupies. One toman is 27 roupies, the sum in question represents 2 tomans and 3500. I have included the receipt in the letter I sent to my masters in Isphahan, so that they can demand this sum from him. I have sent the letter through the intermediary of Topchents Marcos."⁷⁶

The *avak* did not have a fixed rate according to the information offered by the account book. The three instances found have 20%, 26% and 27% as rates respectively. While they are not identical, one may safely say that they remain higher in all instances than the rates cited by Tavernier for the Isphahani *şarrāfs*. All of the above information comes from the account book of Hovhannes and concerns commercial habits in India. There are, however, higher percentages to be found in Europe when the money is lent for a sea voyage, and it will be reimbursed in another

⁷⁵Levon Xac'ikcan, "Le registre d'un marchand Armenien en Perse, en Inde et au Tibet (1682-1682), Annales (22ième année, mars-avril 1967, no2), p. 263.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, p. 263.

port. Given that this was the most dangerous of enterprises the rates could reach 50%.⁷⁷

It is unusual to find such clear examples of percentages as found in Hovhannes' account book. Usury was not practiced openly because of the trouble it might have caused with the Persian authorities. In most instances the Armenians resorted to a device that hid all percentages: they put down the sum they lent plus the percentage expected over time as a global sum.⁷⁸ Tavernier tells of the same device used by the Banians of Isphahan, so it apparently was not the monopoly of the Armenians.⁷⁹ Often the global sum inscribed was the sum lent plus the addition of half of that sum. This does not signify that the percentage of interest was that high, nor that the period was so long that the sum grew by 50%. It was a form of guarantee.

There are examples of *avak* for sea ventures among the Armenians as well. In these cases the *avak* is referred to as *covaein vark*, of which there are two known types:

- the *yak gūshah*: a sum of money borrowed in one port to be paid in another port.
- the *dū gūshah*: a sum of money borrowed in the port of departure to be paid in the same port upon return. The *dū gūshah* had the highest rate percentages of all.

The most common form of sea loan was the *yak gūshah*. The term is a Persian one meaning "one corner." *Dū gūshah* means "two corners."⁸⁰

⁷⁷Š. L. Xačikyan, pp. 164-165.

⁷⁸Š. L. Xačikyan, pp. 164-184, there are several examples of debts with their percentages. There are also the different forms a debt could take, i.e. a debt with a guaranty with the possibility of seizing the guarantee in case of default, as opposed to debts with no guarantee.

⁷⁹Sir John Chardin, English edition, 1988 p. 281.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, p. 165.

In addition there were two forms of *avak* for the lender. If he required a guarantee, it was a loan which carried possibility of seizing some form property in case of default. The second form was a loan without any collateral. Again the percentages varied with the latter form of loan being the more expensive.

The certificate or obligation of debt was called *barāt*. The term is again a Persian one. It is often stated within them how long the journey was expected to last: for example, the trip from Amsterdam via Venice to Basra was estimated at seven months; Moscow to Amsterdam was expected to last three months. Sometimes the debt could be paid several days or months after arrival. The debt was sometimes put down in the currency of the country in which it is to be paid.⁸¹ Another common Armenian practice is that of conducting commerce and exchanging moneys without receipts, which made it impossible to trace usurious interest rates.

There is evidence that the commercial practices of the Armenian merchants in Europe were not different. This passage in the Amsterdam notarial archives⁸² demonstrates the same habits of borrowing and exchange of moneys without so much as a receipt. It seems logical to deduce that the whole system evolved both on trust

⁸¹Տ. Լ. Տաճիկյան, *Nor Julayi hay vajarakanut'yunə ev nra arevtratntesakan kapərə fusastani het XVII ev XVIII dərurum*. [The Merchants of New Julfa and their commercial ties with Russia in the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries.], (Erevan: 1988), p. 176.

⁸²We hesitate to cite the entire passage in the text above. It is an extremely jumbled and ungrammatical one, be it in Dutch the English translation found in Van Rooy. "All Armenian or Persian merchants in this city [of Amsterdam] who declared to be the genuine truth. -on behalf of those whom it might concern-that it is the manner and custom of the interpreter or commissioner agent at the house of whom the Armenian or Persian merchants used to live in this city, to always act as the commissioner agent of his guest, that the said interpreter is furnishing his guest at the latter's request with fl. 10-, fl. 100-, fl. 1000-or that much more according to the amount needed by him, without taking the interpreter or the commissioner any IOU or signature for that, as it is not usual either that the Armenian or Persian merchants furnishing the interpreters or commissioner agents IOUs or signature for that, hence the merchants mutually trust and believe, in such a way that the restitution of any money furnished or supplied is settled without receipt being given or demanded. Furthermore, the witnesses declare that when an interpreter or commissioner agent submits a proper invoice as usual among merchants to the merchants on money advanced and cost involved on the merchant's goods, all such proper bills are met without any contradiction." The original and its translation are to be found in: Van Rooy, Silvio. "Armenian Merchant Habits as Mirrored in the 17-18th Century Amsterdam Documents." *Revue des études arméniennes*, 3 (n.s.) (1966): 347-357. p. 350.

and on closely kept accounts. The following passage is one of the most informative ones for practices in Europe:

that the said interpreter is furnishing his guest at the latter's request with fl. 10-, fl.100-, fl. 1000—or that much more according to the amount needed by him, without taking the interpreter or the commissioner any IOU or signature for that, as it is not usual either that the Armenian or Persian merchants furnishing the interpreters or missionary agents IOUs or signature for that, hence the merchants mutually trust and believe, in such a way that the restitution of any money furnished or supplied is settled without receipt being given or demanded. Furthermore, the witnesses declare that when an interpreter or missionary agent submits a proper invoice as usual among merchants to the merchants on money advanced and cost involved on the merchant's goods, all such proper bills are met without any contradiction.⁸³

Another piece of information provided by the above passage is the existence and the function of the missionary or interpreter. Hovhannes has recourse to one as well in Surat to release his merchandise from customs. He has recourse to this other Armenian merchant, because he himself did not speak the language. The passage cited from the archives begins with a detail omitted here: "All of the Armenian or Persian merchants residing in this city [Amsterdam] who declared...that it is the manner and the custom of the interpreter or missionary at the house of whom the Armenian or Persian merchants used to live...."⁸⁴ This may indicate that there was an Armenian house in Amsterdam, in the manner of the *fondacios* of the Italian merchants abroad. The passage also seems to suggest that it was no longer habitual for the Armenians to reside at the interpreter's house. The interpreter/commissionary had an important role, for he must have conducted most of the transactions in a

⁸³This passage is one of the most detail notarial documents found by Dr, Simon Hart and published by S. Van Rooy, it is prot. not. 6631 and is dated October 1717, it is "signed on October 25, 26 and 27 before a notary public van der Groe by eleven Armenians, Nicolse Theodoro(d.1742), Maruta di Bogus(d. 1737), Markus theodor (d.1722) Pedro di Sarkies (found to be in Amsterdam 1703-1717) Stephan di Johannes (d. 1737) Serkies d' Aviticq (in Amsterdam 1696-1717) Zatur di petrus (d, 1743) Makartom di Jakob (Amsterdam 1713-1717), Aved di Murath (Plm. 1682-1721), Pietro Abro (in Amsterdam(1713-18) pieter Aved(d.1740)." in Van Rooy, Silvio. "Armenian Merchant Habits as Mirrored in the 17-18th Century Amsterdam Documents." *Revue des études arméniennes*, 3 (n.s.) (1966):347-357. p. 350

⁸⁴See footnotes 93-96 of this chapter for the Dutch archives.

language inaccessible to his colleagues. Despite the fact that the travellers insist on the Armenians'⁸⁵ obsession with languages, given the scope of their commercial affairs their linguistic skills must have fallen short somewhere between Tibet and Amsterdam.

There is further proof that the Armenians were in the habit of establishing their own houses with interpreters in residence. Philippe de Zagly, a merchant adventurer of the seventeenth century, obtained permission from the Duke of Kurland, now Latvia, to establish three Armenians' houses each with their own interpreters. This is a case of notable and exceptional diplomatic success as the salaries of these Armenian interpreters were to be paid by the Duke. In 1696, de Zagly also obtained an agreement that the Armenian merchants would pay no tolls on the domains of the Duke. They were also granted the use of ducal ships for the transport of their goods. If his diplomatic successes were exceptional, given that he was granted most of his requests, he was in other ways a typical merchant of his times. It was his knowledge of prices and tolls and of merchant habits that made him capable of obtaining very precise concessions from the Duke. Elsewhere the Armenian merchants supported their houses and interpreters themselves.⁸⁶ In the passage extracted from the Amsterdam archives, the role of the interpreter seemed to go beyond interpreting and carrying out negotiations. He seems to have been a local bank. He furnished his colleagues with the sums they demanded for their commercial transactions.⁸⁷

⁸⁵See the passage by the traveller John Fryer in the previous chapter.

⁸⁶Roberto Gulbenkian, "Philippe de Zagly, marchand arménien de Julfa, et l'établissement du commerce persan en Courlande en 1696," *Revue des études arméniennes*, 7(n.s.)9(1970): 361-99.

⁸⁷See footnotes 93-96.

One can advance the hypothesis that the merchant habits of the Armenians were not so much a function of where they traded as of their own intrinsic practices evolved and codified into customs amongst themselves.

The Simple Non-Commercial Loan:

In New Julfa, there were rare instances of women borrowing money to support their families until their husbands returned. Women did not have the right to borrow money—they could only borrow with their husbands' permission. The rate for these loans were equivalent to that of the letter of credit, or *mouhak*: 0.75 per month or 9% *per annum*. Even if the loan contracted by the merchant's wife was non-commercial in nature, being as it was for the subsistence of a merchant's family, it soon integrated itself into the commercial circuit. She borrowed from a merchant and her husband remained responsible for this debt wherever he was, and often paid this debt elsewhere in the form of a letter of credit.⁸⁸

As long distance travellers had to leave their families alone for long periods of time, another male member of the family was put in charge of their needs. Examples abound in Zacharia of Akoulis, where he often escorts his brother's wife and children from one location to the other. It usually was a brother, nephew or uncle put in charge, who would then borrow money if necessary. Male family members were responsible for the debts of the other members of the family. Again there is a very sad example recounted in Zacharia of Akoulis: as has been mentioned before his brother Šemavon was an agent of the Khan of Erevan. Upon the death of his brother, promissory notes signed by his brother were produced by the khan, and Zacharia had

⁸⁸Š. L.Xačikyan, 182-4.

to reimburse them all so his family would not lose its reputation. Good credit was very important in merchant families.⁸⁹

The merchants of New Julfa and the associations they formed also accepted money from other inhabitants of New Julfa, who were not affiliated with them in their commercial ventures in any way. The money was not linked to the profit the merchants made, as it was in the case of capital borrowed by the factors. It was a simple loan with an interest rate, called a *muddatī*, a Persian term signifying a time loan. This form of lent money was also called *amānat*. It did not grow with the merchants' profit, but on the other hand the merchant was not responsible for the borrowed sum in the case of loss through accidents such as ship wrecks or thefts. The lender bore that risk in order to augment his money. This form of loan had interest rates ranging from 6 to 9%.⁹⁰

Unpaid debts

There seems to have been a great amount of solidarity among Armenian merchants as to recourse against an unpaid *avak*. Since the system functioned on trust, an unpaid debt was of general concern. Whether there was a *barāt*, or other form of receipt, or no receipt at all, the Armenian merchants of the city where the debt had remained unpaid would hold a meeting. They would certify that a certain debt had remained unpaid and send a certificate attesting this to New Julfa. The Council of Merchants described in the last chapter would likewise convoke a meeting. The sum would be raised by the committee of merchants and then be restituted to the

⁸⁹Zacharia of Akoulis, several passages, pp.81-90.

⁹⁰Š. L.Xač'ikyan. p. 139.

lender.⁹¹ One can easily see how important it was for a factor to remain free of such default in order to thrive in a system which depended on trust. Being blacklisted in New Julfa meant a ban on dealings with other Armenian merchants around the world. A good reputation and good credit were essential, and word travelled fast. All this certainly demonstrates that New Julfa was a center, but such efficiency also suggests the existence of an elaborate organization. How did this merchant organization function? Was there an 'Armenian Company' in New Julfa?

The 'Armenian Trading Company' of New Julfa

In the only study of the merchant families of New Julfa, Ter Yovhaneanc' speaks of the existence of a large Armenian commercial company: *Ənkerut'iwn vacarakanut'ean Hayoc' Julayu*, which translates best as "The Armenian Commercial Association of Julfa" or "Commercial Company of Julfa." He has been repeatedly cited without much effort to substantiate the veracity of the claim.⁹² A recent study by Susan Xaç'ik'yan published in Erevan attempts to clarify the situation:

A treaty was signed between the Russian Tsar and the Armenians. The Tsar granted the Armenians permission to trade over the famous and much sought after northern route, access to which he had denied the Dutch and the English throughout the seventeenth century. Save a brief success by Anthony Jenkinson at the beginning of the century for the short lived English Muscovy Company, all of the numerous European attempts to penetrate Russian trade and use the northern route had failed. The Armenians proceeded to woo the tsar in the true style of high diplomacy. In 1659, Tsar Alexei was presented with a throne decorated with precious stones by the

⁹¹Š. L.Xaç'ikyan, p.176.

⁹²As in studies by Kevorkian and Kévonian.

trader Khoja Zakar Sahradian. The gift was not a personal one, but rather that of an association of merchants, representing as he did, the merchants of Julfa. Eight years later the splendid gift paid off: a commercial treaty was signed between Moscow and the Armenians in 1667. The representative of the Armenians at the treaty negotiations was a merchant by the name of Grikor Lucikenc, who in fact specifically represented the Armenian merchants of New Julfa.

A very thorough study of the 1667 treaty of the merchants of New Julfa with the Russian Tsar addresses the question of the existence of a large commercial company in New Julfa. This treaty was signed by twenty-two people. Susan Xaç'ikyan compares this list to the names in Ter Yovhaneanc' archival list of the important families of the suburb. She identifies the signatories to be the *Kalantar* of New Julfa, the head of the crafts or *Ustabashi* and 20 other Armenians. She states that it is conventionally believed that the treaty was signed by a Company—an Armenian company, close to the model of the European ones. She then proceeds to disclaim the existence of a large European style company. By a precise study of the family names of the signatories of the 1667 treaty she shows that the twenty Armenians were none other than the heads of the different neighborhoods of New Julfa. They are termed *Ənker avakner*, and *İekavar Anzer*, that is, “senior associates” or “directors,” which might have misled some to believe that they were the directors of a large European-style company. They were in fact the administrative representatives of the Armenians of Isphahan. The signatories were the assembly of merchants who administered New Julfa and took care of Armenian merchant affairs world wide. As discussed in the preceeding chapter, this was a well-established, hereditary system of government, both civil and merchant. It is not, however, an association for trade alone, comparable to the European companies.

There is a problem in Susan Xaç'ikyan's affirmation that there was not a large commercial company on the European model in New Julfa. Her identification of the

signatories of the treaty as the administrators of New Julfa does not negate the possibility of the existence of a company. In fact, the opposite is easily argued, since the two sides would be mutually compatible. Throughout her study she insists that the Armenian commercial system was not “bloody and exploitative” like the European ones. This insistence, along with a few requisite references to Engels, make it amply clear that the identification of the existence of a large, monopolistic company was politically undesirable.

She denies the existence of a formal Armenian company in New Julfa. She has, however, accomplished the essential, she has identified the signatories of the Russian treaty: the municipal council of New Julfa, who had sent an ambassador to the Tsar to represent them. Characteristically, they do not travel themselves. The municipal council of New Julfa and the directors of The Armenian Commercial Association are one and the same.

There is no mention of a large Armenian company in any of the European travellers, nor, seemingly, anywhere else. Of course, the European travellers had little interest in Armenian internal affairs. There is, however, no doubt that their commercial system rested on association. The identification of the Armenian representatives in the treaty of 1667 confirms the political function of the merchant municipal council of New Julfa. Far from denying the existence of a company, it sooner confirms it. Whether it can be called a “company” in the European sense is a more complicated matter.

Viewing the council with that comparison in mind, there are several elements which resemble the European Companies in functionality. The richest merchants of Julfa were its directors. Just as with the European directors, their role was an administrative and financial one. They invested and remained at home. They ruled the commercial affairs of their fellow Armenians abroad by taking responsibility for their unpaid debts, and by pronouncing judgement on any litigations. New Julfa was

a commercial center, and its administrators ruled over merchant matters. These elements speak for a parallel with the national companies formed in Europe. Furthermore, it exercised international political power, such as with the treaty cited above, comparable to the European companies who signed treaties independently of other political powers such as their respective governments. These elements notwithstanding, there is one major difference: the merchant municipality of New Julfa was a governing body for the Armenian population in exile. Their role as municipal government for a people in exile granted them more much political power than the European company directors had in their own homelands. The Armenian company was a government, though one subject to the Persian Court.

Whether their company had an overview of all Armenian merchant affairs is not entirely clear through any of the sources. It is clear, however, that it acted as a central governing body for all commercial affairs. As for the merchants, they were part of a strict hierarchy and the directors of the municipal council were certainly at its highest level. In this sense they can be viewed as an all-powerful company with a monopoly on all major transactions. There was another characteristic that differentiated the Armenian Company from the European ones, and which persisted through the history of the four most prominent families of New Julfa. It is that the preferred system of association was the family association. Without going through the details of the fortunes of the Lazarians or the Šahrimanians which can be found in Ter Yovhaneanc' informative study, one can deduce a general rule: the family was the basic unit of both Armenian merchant associations and social structure.

A good example is the Lazarian family, founders of the Lazarian Institute in Moscow. Throughout their history, fathers worked with their sons, the sons with their brothers, cousins and uncles.⁹³ To a nineteenth-century historian of these families,

⁹³There is a long chapter in Ter Yovhaneanc' on the Lazarians.

like Ter Yovhaneanc', this was so obvious he did not bother to mention or analyze it. He dwells on every factual detail available for these prominent families without once drawing the reader's attention to the common factor in the whole system: family association. Seen in this light, the Armenian company was an expansive family association involving many families, and accurately described as an association between the most prominent families of New Julfa.

The family system was preeminent on every level, as is made clear in the diary of Zacharia of Akoulis. He does not belong to the class of the prominent Khojas. He is not from New Julfa but from Akoulis in Armenia. Rather, he falls somewhere in what one might call the middle class of the Armenian bourgeoisie. His brother was an important official, agent of the Khan of Erevan, and he himself, after travelling on behalf of others, borrows money for an independent commercial venture as soon as he can. In 1654, he borrows capital from another family, "the house of Maseh" as he calls it. He reimburses the money in 1663, and he keeps his profit. As soon as he has earned money, in the same year of 1663, he lends some money to his brother-in-law who wanted to go to Tabriz to start trading for himself.⁹⁴ Zacharia went through a whole period of initiation under the supervision of his uncle, carrying merchandise for his own father. The entire family was responsible for any debt incurred by any member, as the example of Zacharia himself illustrates. As mentioned before, he had to pay the entire accumulated debt of his deceased brother Šemavon. In the same way, the Armenian Company acted as a large family unit, and as demonstrated above, all outstanding debts could be sent to New Julfa for repayment.

The New Julfa company did not hold a monopoly on trade in the region. Here as well, Zacharia is an important source. He recounted that there were several smaller associations in Armenia proper in which he himself participated as he travelled

⁹⁴Zacharia of Akoulis in two passages, p. 43, p. 62.

through the area. Zacharia, it is to be remembered, was not from New Julfa, but from Akoulis, and as such participates in another circle of associations and families.

Even though Susan Xaç'ikyan denies the existence of a larger company in New Julfa, she has thoroughly studied the form of merchant association in New Julfa and Transcaucasia. She finds that

- 1) Armenian companies are family associations, and the participants are all family members.
- 2) The management of the association is in the hands of the eldest male member of the family
- 3) The association bore the name of the family, or the first name of the managing member
- 4) Smaller associations often functioned under the protection of a larger one.
- 5) Some associations were temporary. For associations which were engaged in long term deals, there were regular meetings. All members could participate in the direction of the transactions. All members were responsible for the association.
- 6) The members of an association were free to enter other associations when using their own capital or that of their wives.
- 7) In Iran and Transcaucasia, Armenian associations did enter joint ventures with non-Armenian merchants.⁹⁵

Even if her denial of the existence of a large Company in Julfa is deemed incorrect, her findings on the structure of Armenian mercantile association seem valid. An examinations of archival materials found in the notarial records of Amsterdam offer further proof of the family being the foundation of mercantile associations.

Sources on transfer of family capital are rare. While the following do not concern New Julfa directly, several of the Amsterdam papers provide information on customary practices among the Armenian merchants operating there:

⁹⁵Š. L.Xaç'ikyan, pp. 116-121. For a joint venture between two Jews, two Armenians, two Persians and two Indian merchants: see p. 120.

...among the Armenians one is considered to be able to conduct one's own business if he has only the age of 15 or 16 and is in possession of his natural knowledge; he is then passed for mature and all his acts are considered as being valid like those of a mature person.⁹⁶

This is the testimony of two merchants, Panes and Anthony, in front of an Armenian notary. Other documents found in the same archives concern the affairs of a merchant family passing merchandise to Smyrna for a son who is distinctly under age. Before reaching the age of majority a young Armenian boy could maintain capital of his own. This document, though a little difficult to follow because of the enumeration of the numerous family ties, provides an example of this:

In the year 1661 at the order of the requisitionist's mother a certain Sultan Petrus has passed, with the knowledge of her husband, the requisitionists father, Badja Balthasar: 21 bales of Turkish yarns to her eldest son, the requisitionist's brother, Hoja Oaness, being about 8 or 9 years old, without his other brothers having to claim anything on this...that it solely belonged to the said Hoja Oaness.⁹⁷

It is clear from this passage that a mother has established capital for her underage son from her own money, even though he has not reached the age of majority.

Another document proves this to be a general rule:

That it is usual in their countries that a son who is sent abroad, be it to school or to be trained in something, usually gets some money or merchandise to take with him, which are consigned to a factor or correspondant or friend as one happens to have in the country in which the said son is going to stay.⁹⁸

⁹⁶The original reads: onder de Armeniers yemandt wordt gehouden voor bequam te sijn om sijn affaires te verrigten als hij maer heeft den ouderdom van 15 te 16 jaren, ende sijne natuurlijke kennisse zulcx dan voor mondigh gepasseert ende validelijck alles wat de soodanige verricht gelijck yemant die meerderjarigh. Silvio Van Rooy, "Armenian Merchant Habits as Mirrored in the 17-18th Century Amsterdam Documents, *Revue des études arméniennes*, 3 (n.s.) (1966): 347-357. p. 353.

⁹⁷The Dutch document found in Silvio Van Rooy's article is correct but the author's English translation makes no sense, we have consulted the original document and substituted our own. The original reads: "In den jaere 1661 door order van de reaurants moeder Sultan de Petrus tot Smirna gepascert heeft eenetwentigh Baelen Turcx gaeren voor eygen gegeven heeft met kennissen van haer man des requirants Vaeder Badja Balthasaar aen haer ouder soon des requirants broeder Hodjsa Oannes ende omtrent acht a negen jaer out sonder dat hun andere Broeders daer yets op hebben te pretenderen....Oannes alleen eygen toequam." See Van Rooy, p. 352.

⁹⁸See Van Rooy's translation of this document, p. 351.

In another document, too lengthy and convoluted to quote,⁹⁹ a young man is given capital by his mother, though he is too young to use it. Instead, he has a supervisor who travels with the cargo for him. This habit of giving commercial property to young boys goes beyond proving that there existed a family system. It raises some interesting questions. A mother gives capital to an underage boy, all carefully recorded in the presence of a notary. It is well known that women could contribute capital but could not commerce without being represented by a male member of their family. Legally, the money belongs to her son, who is too young to be considered responsible. Could this have been an underhanded way of protecting money while lending it? Was it women trading in the names of their sons to protect their own family's capital from their husbands? Or was it truly for establishing a capital base for young sons? Unfortunately no source exists to help answer these questions.

There can be no question as to the importance of the family associations. Merchant formation as well as association indicate the primacy of the family. The existence of a large company in New Julfa seems probable because of the unity with which the Russian Court was approached, and because of the identity of the twenty-two signatories of the 1667 treaty.

⁹⁹In another Dutch document we find another similar case of capital given to the very young. The following is not mistyped, it is a mistranslation: "In the year 1658 the requisitionist's mother furnished the said requisitionist, from her own capital and separate means, with the sum of seven thousand rijksdaalders (1 RD = Dfl. 2,50 ann.) which the requisitionist, together with the witness (Panes, ann.) and also a certain Armenian merchant, called Godja Adon under whose supervision the requisitionist, being too young still to travel together to Persia, was at that time, took with him in cargo on his, the requisitionist's own account; additionally declaring both witnesses (apart from Panes there was Joseph Anthony, ann.) that there was a custom in that country that mothers as well as fathers supply capital to their sons, and hand it to them when they travel somewhere, though they are still young in years, in order to supply such sons abroad with a backing." This mistranslation of Van Rooy's makes the document incomprehensible. After reading the original Dutch the meaning becomes clear: the "requisitionist" was too young to travel to Persia together with Goja Andon who was his appointed supervisor. He was given a capital of 7000 rijksdaelders by his mother. Being too young to travel with his supervisor, it is Goja Anton who takes a cargo for him with his own, but for the account of his protege. See the original Dutch in Van Rooy, p. 353.

The passages in which the “Armenian Company of New Julfa” is cited in the *History of New Julfa* seems to indicate that the larger trading Company was not in existence under Shah Abbas, but was a later development.¹⁰⁰

A merchant manual printed in Amsterdam in 1699¹⁰¹ which contains prices, weights, and measures for the world seems to confirm the existence of an organized joint effort such as a company. It is in the language of New Julfa, therefore specifically for the merchants of the suburb and no one else. Were the merchants simply grouped in smaller family associations, they would be in competition as the practice of trade demands. If such were the case, why give such vital information away? Furthermore, a compendium of prices, routes, weights and measures for different cities in Iran, India, France, Holland, Russia, and Far eastern destinations such as Manilla, and more, cannot be accomplished within the experience of one man. It speaks of a joint effort of recording and classifying. As such it probably indicates the presence of a large organization such as a commercial company.

It seems that the necessity for a company later arose once the Armenians lost their position as the sole exporters of Persian silk. As has been pointed out before by V. Gregorian, this very important role kept the European from getting capitulations and concessions from the Shahs. On account of the Armenian role in the silk trade the Shahs did not have to give any concessions to the Europeans, nor deal directly with them.¹⁰² In this sense the Armenians played a tremendous political role during the first quarter of the seventeenth century. However, when the Safavids started dealing directly with the Dutch and English, the Armenians needed a similar organization in order to compete. Only then did it become necessary for them to establish a

¹⁰⁰Ter Yovhancanc' makes this clear throughout the text without ever stating it.

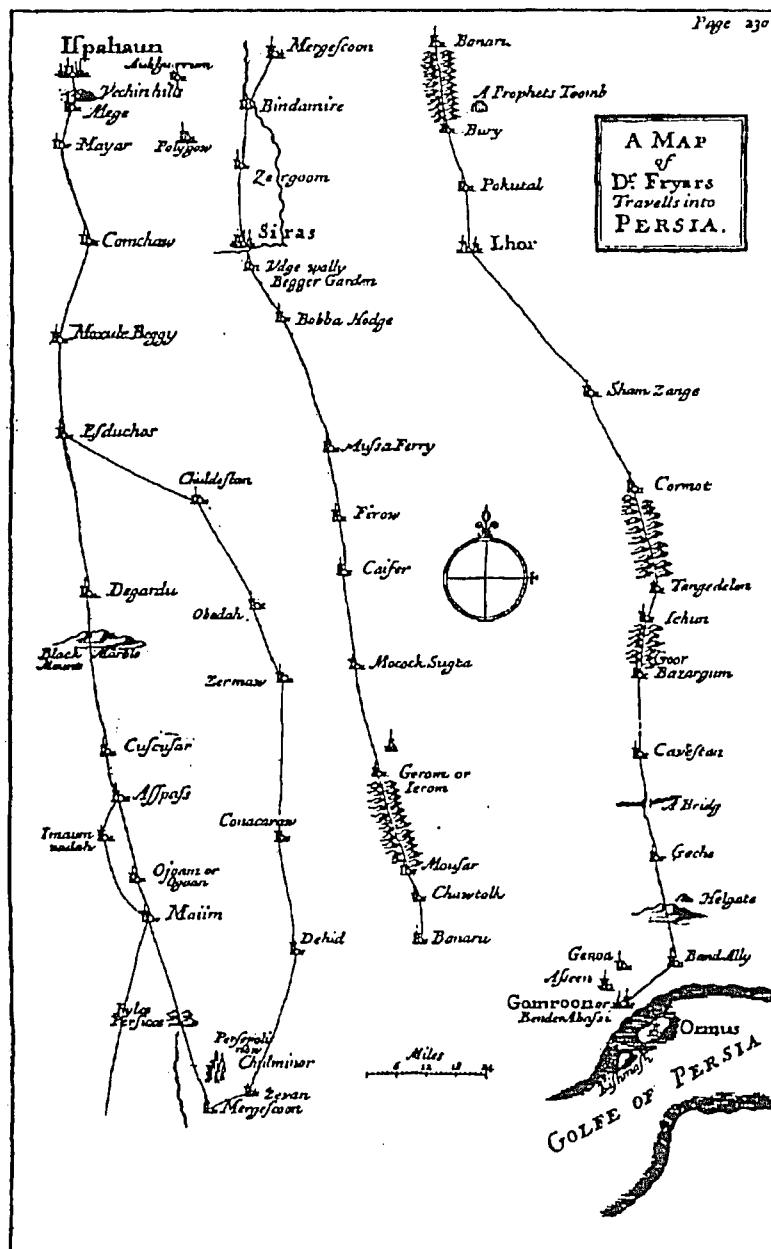
¹⁰¹See footnote 33 for the full title of this manual attributed to Lucas of Vanand.

¹⁰²See Vartan Gregorian's conclusion.

formalized company, because individual exemptions were useless compared to privileges granted to the Companies.¹⁰³ Therefore, it was out of competition with the larger, national European Companies that the Armenian Company in New Julfa came into being. This hypothesis can only make sense if the companies were real competition.

Just what the economic role of the Armenians was during the second half of the seventeenth century has not been established. As independent and efficient as the Armenians might have been, they were still subject to the policies of the Persian Court. It is their political position in Persia and in the World that will be examined next. Their position as a people without a nation, their political disadvantage, was sometimes a unique advantage in international diplomacy. They often obtained permission to trade where the Dutch and English were denied.

¹⁰³Ter Yovhancanc' simply states that the Company was formed to obtain exemptions and concessions.



Seventeenth century map showing the route from
Isphahan to Bandar Abbas

CHAPTER V: INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Trading is a very honourable profession in the *East*, as being the best of those that have any Stability, and are not so liable to change....The name of Merchant is a Name much respected in the *East*, and is not allowed to shop keepers or Dealers in trifling Goods; nor to those who Trade not in foreign countries; 'Tis allow'd only to such as employ Deputies or Factors in the remotest Countries: And those men are sometimes raised to the highest Ranks, and are usually employed in Embassies.¹

Why were the Armenians the Principal Merchants in Persia?

The fact that the Armenians dominated Safavid international trade at the beginning of the seventeenth century is common knowledge.² The explanations offered for it, however, often have been erroneous. The frequently quoted explanation offered by John Malcom, that the Armenians were industrious and the Persians lazy, comes straight out of the travel accounts. The other misconception is the belief that Shah Abbas "gave" the silk trade to the Armenians.

To Jean Chardin, a wealthy and prominent merchant himself, the rank and title of merchant seemed an honourable one in Persia and the East. In Europe and Russia there were higher occupations than that of a merchant. Mercantile activity was regarded with some suspicion and disdain. In Europe, it was clearly the legacy of a Catholicism opposed to usury. Chardin was Protestant, as were many important merchants and financiers at the time of Louis XIV. It may seem a suprising statement at first that

¹ Chardin, English edition, p.279.

² See the study on seventeenth century trade by Niels Steensgaard. R. W. Ferrier's work in the British Archives has established this without explaining, it or expanding on it, save for one article on the 1688 treaty of the Armenians with the British East India Company. See also chapter 8 of vol. 6 of the *Cambridge History of Iran* by the same author.

merchants had such a high rank in the East, but Chardin's definition of "merchant" becomes clearer when he speaks of the Persian king as the greatest merchant of all. He was referring to the wealthiest class of merchants, involved in foreign trade (i.e., the *khojas*), and states that the title of merchant applies to them alone. These merchants never travelled and never dealt with money-making directly. His usage of the term describes a 'leisure' class much like the European aristocracy, but whose wealth derived not from the land but from commerce. A little later in the same chapter, he writes that most of these wealthy merchants are Persians but not "Mahometans," by which he means Armenians. At the time the Armenians were often designated as 'Persians,' especially in Europe and by European travellers to the East:

However, the *Mahometans* are not the greatest Traders in *Asia* tho' they be dispers'd almost in every part of it; and tho' their Religion bears sway in the larger part of it. Some of them are too Effeminate, and some too severe to apply themselves to Trade, especially foreign Trading. Wherefor in *Turky*, the *Christians* and *Jews* carry on the main foreign trade: and in *Persia* the *Christians* and *Indian Gentiles*....The Armenians manage alone the whole European Trade.³

Often when reading the travel accounts, with their numerous references to the Armenian merchants both on the road and in Persia proper, one wonders at their omnipresence and at the total want of any reference to the Persian merchants. In other passages devoted to merchants or trade, two of the travellers, Jean Chardin and John Fryer,⁴ provide some help in understanding this seemingly complete absence of Persian merchants. Both state that the Persians were mainly concerned with internal and local trade, and that if they travelled abroad at all it was to India alone. By contrast, the importance of both Persian merchants and officials to silk distribution inside Iran has led at least one scholar to erroneously state that the Armenians had no significant

³Chardin, p. 280-81.

⁴*Ibid.*, p.281, John Fryer p.264

role in the silk trade.⁵ They had a specific, exclusive and important role: the Armenians had the exclusive rights to the exportation of silk during the first quarter of the century.

If, as Chardin states, trade was such an honourable occupation in the East, how can it be that the “Mahometans “were not” the greatest traders in *Asia*”. Surely there must be a better explanation than Chardin’s perception of them as “Effeminate,” though this might have been an understandable prejudice on the part of a French Protestant unfamiliar with modes of body language acceptable between Muslim males.

Chardin, however, was neither a casual observer, nor an ordinary merchant in transit. He had painstakingly studied the Persian language, and returned to live in the country for four entire years in order to study its climate, customs, and inhabitants. His description of the Persian “Mohametans” as both “too Effeminate” and “too severe” to be involved in foreign trade may seem contradictory at first, but in fact refers to different things altogether: If “effeminate” refers to the custom of Persian men to hold hands in public, or the elaborate fashion of their dress, “severe” must refer to their religious zeal. The importance of religious conformance under the Shi’ite Safavids is well documented. While usury was forbidden by religious law, trading and commerce certainly were not. It is clear, however, that rather than the “laziness” Fryer ascribes to them, there are concrete reasons which caused them to eschew foreign travel and trade. Their religious customs themselves limited their involvement in foreign trade. Some of the demands made on them by daily religious requirements would have been impossible to follow elsewhere, especially in Christian Europe. Consequently, India, with its large muslim population, was the preferred destination. While international

⁵This misunderstanding is to be found throughout Linda Steinmann’s dissertation on the Persian silk trade. The confusion is the following: when one refers to the Armenians having the monopoly of the silk trade, it means the monopoly of the foreign trade of silk. As she make clear in her thesis, the Shah and his officials had the monopoly of the distribution of silk, which makes her believe that the role of the Armenians has been overestimated. The one does not preclude the other. The Shah had the monopoly of the silk distribution and the Armenians soon had the exclusivity of its foreign trade.

trade may not have been proscribed by the *sharī‘at*, the full observance of its strictures while residing in non-Muslims lands, as required by foreign trade and travel, would have been extremely impracticable:

The *Armenians* manage alone the whole European trade; the reason whereof is, because the *Mahometans* cannot strictly observe their religion among the *Christians* with relation to the outward purity it requires of them; for Instance their Law forbids them to eat Flesh either Dress’d or Kill’d by a man of a different Religion, and likewise to drink in the same Cup with such a one; It forbids to call upon God in a place adorned with figures; it even forbids in some Cases, the touching Persons of a contrary Opinion, which is a thing most impossible to keep among the *Christians*.⁶

The prohibition against usury was easily bypassed by both the Armenians and the Muslims by means of a common trick⁷ described both in Tavernier and Chardin. The ‘moneybag trick,’ with interest precounted and fictitiously included in the whole amount lent, preserved appearances of propriety. Nevertheless, there were other aspects of religious law where appearances were not so easily preserved. For example, how could a practicing Shi’ite travel in Europe without ever touching Europeans or eating their food?

The Christianity of the Armenians of Persia does not explain their prominence in foreign trade. Their Christianity surely only partially explains all the positive attributes the European travellers shower upon them. They were indeed thrifty and hard working; but above all in the eyes of these travelling merchants, they were Christian. The Armenians could freely travel to Europe without thought to religious difficulties, which in itself was a great advantage, but even more importantly, these edulcorated ‘Persians’ were more acceptable to the Europeans. The tone adopted by the travellers makes this especially clear. They constantly attribute to the Muslims all manner of

⁶Sir John Chardin, English ed., p. 281.

⁷“They go to the Judge and borrower, holding in their Hand a Bag of Money; one saith’ there is in it such a Sum, tho’ the Interest agreed on be wanting in it, the judge without any further Enquiry, orders the writing to be drawn up.” Chardin, p.281.

sins, and undesirable character flaws, such as sloth. Yet, even the avarice of the Armenian merchant is represented as a quality.⁸ There is little doubt that other Europeans probably shared this attitude. For this reason, the Armenians were better suited to function as ambassadors to the courts of Christian Europe, and in fact, many of the first ambassadors to Europe were of Armenian origin.⁹ In most European texts and archives the Armenians are called 'Persians.' The majority of the Persians that the seventeenth-century Europeans knew actually were Armenians.¹⁰ There is, however, one pitfall which must be carefully skirted. No one has yet pointed out that the merchants going to Persia in this latter period are all Protestant, including the Frenchmen, Tavernier and Chardin. The Catholic attitude towards the Armenians cannot be deduced from the attitude of these Protestant merchants. Further on in this study it will become clear that it was quite different. From the perspective of the Catholics, these Christians of a different church were not quite acceptable. There was good reason for the fact that the Frenchmen who set foot in Persia came either as representatives of the Catholic church, sent to proselytize, or otherwise as lay Protestant traders. The seventeenth century was one of fervent religious activity both in Iran and Europe. Consequently it is automatically assumed that matters of religion often hold the keys to explaining many historical enigmas of the era.

⁸See passages from Tavernier in the preceeding chapter.

⁹See Kévorkian for the first consular envoys to Marseille. It was not always the case, however. The first Persian Ambassador to Louis the XIV was sent in 1715 at the very end of his reign. He was not an Armenian. His name was Muhammad Reza Beg. There is a famous painting at Versailles of his reception by Louis XIV.

¹⁰See Van Rooy for the Armenians in Amsterdam; in France later, during the eighteenth century, this generalization does not hold up as well as it does elsewhere. The Armenians are called "Arméniens" and not "Persans", but the famous *Lettres Persanes* has imaginary Moslem Persians as characters as opposed to Voltaire's famous Zadig who has an Armenian name. The Armenian was such a common figure on the roads of Europe that Jean Jacques Rousseau disguised himself as an Armenian to travel incognito. In the seventeenth century archives, however, Marcara, who was an Armenian, is referred to as a Persian gentleman.

The religious equation, however, does not entirely suffice to explain the Armenians' role as exporters. There certainly were Persian merchants, despite the silence there is in scholarship about them. In a rare passage devoted to them, Bert Fragner in his economic analysis speaks of merchant princes. The word used to describe them means partner in Turkish *hurtaq*. He demonstrates that most wealthy land owners preferred to live in the city, they invested their excess revenues in commerce. He traces the existence of this class back to the 14th century and finds them still investing in commerce in Safavid times. Chardin describes¹¹ the Shah as the wealthiest merchant prince. Most interesting is his statement that the Persian merchants still conducted their commerce solely in cash clumsily carrying around bags of silver worth 50 tumans. He cites the poor impression this made on several European travellers. Given the methods used by the Armenian merchants, the letter of exchange, the Persian merchant was at a clear disadvantage for international trade. Non cash transactions were known in Iran since Mongol times but in the seventeenth century they seem to have been forgotten.¹² ..A further obstacle to international travel to Europe was the age old enmity with the Ottomans, although there were no wars after the treaty of 1639 Persian merchants might have encountered a less than welcoming attitude. It is doubtful that this was a factor. The Ottoman economy was dependant on the Persian silk trade..” the Ottoman silk industry was dependant on Persian silk; moreover, the trade brought about an average of 70, 000 alton a year into the treasury. In Persia, the currency in circulation was kept supplied by gold and silver earned on the Ottoman markets.”¹³ As mentioned here before the role the Armenians

¹¹Chardin, English edition. p. 279.

¹²P. Jackson and L. Lockhart, eds. *The Timurid and Safavid Periods. The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 6.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.526-27.

¹³H. Inalcik, “Bursa and the Commerce of the Levant,” *JESHO III* (1960), p. 131-147.

played as the carriers of silver in Iran has never been pointed out, it is most probably as important an economic role as the the export of silk and a consequence of it.

All the above factors contribute to the quasi monopoly the Armenians had as exporters of Persian silk. Even still all these logical explanations remain insufficient to account for their prominence. Furthermore, in this capacity they had severe competition from the Europeans. From the onset of the century the English East India Company began to involve themselves in the exportation of Persian silk. A little later the Dutch East India Company also made their entry into the Persian silk market. Though the Armenians were well suited to fulfill the role of exporters of Persian silk to Europe, how did they surpass two large Companies of the Europeans themselves? Both the Dutch and English Companies were operating in Iran when the Armenians succeeded in outdoing them in that arena.

Shah Abbas's Silk Auction of 1618

The Armenians merchants of New Julfa held a place of great importance during the reign of Shah Abbas I, both diplomatically and commercially. For Safavid trade in general, this is the only period that has been studied to a significant extent.¹⁴ The Armenian khojas, after close competition with the English East India Company, won the monopoly on the exportation of Persian silk by literally paying for it. In two steps they established a quasi-monopoly over the exportation of the Persian silk from Iran. As a result of renewed fighting between Iran and Turkey, the customary Turkish route was closed. The English plan to transport Persian silk via oceanic routes was a project by now familiar to Shah Abbas. The *farmān* of 1617 did not really make any

¹⁴N. Steensgaard, *Carracks, Caravans and Companies: The Structural Crisis in the European-Asian Trade of the Early Seventeenth Century*. Copenhagen: 1973, and a recent dissertation: Steinmann, Linda, *Shah Abbas and the Royal Silk Trade, 1599-1629*, unpublished dissertation, New York University, 1986.

concessions to the English whatsoever for the oceanic route, except to permit the English factors to live and practice their religion in Persia and to evade customs. No promises were which would allow the English ships to carry silk.¹⁵

In 1618, a minor Armenian merchant made an offer to reopen the Turkish route for export despite the ongoing war, and pay a duty of five *tomans* per load exported. The Shah immediately accepted this offer. Shah Abbas, who that same year had instituted his monopoly over all silk produced in Persia, made no special concessions to any one. The English mistakenly did not take the recent royal monopoly seriously enough. When he declared that silk for export would be auctioned off to the highest bidder, the English would not go above 43.2 *tomans*. The Armenian merchants, after an initial hesitation, bid a price somewhat higher than the market price—fifty *tomans* per load of thirty-six *mann-i-shāhī*.¹⁶ The English had been rendered helpless by good mercantile diplomacy. The Armenians had outbid the Company and offered to travel the dangerous Turkish route. The Shah was not interested in the southern sea route so long as the Turkish route remained open. Nor did he need the English East India Company to move his silk, since he had the better offers. So the quasi-monopoly of exporting the silk was not simply handed to the Armenians by Shah Abbas, as popular lore about the King's love for the Armenians would have it. In fact, Shah Abbas had been in the midst of negotiations with the English East India Company. The *khojas* won the monopoly for the export of silk out of Persian territory through their own efforts and by paying hard cash. Contrary to English suspicions, the Shah had not extended credit

¹⁵Steensgaard, pp. 329-331. The *farmāns* of 1617 and 1629 are reproduced in their entirety in L. Steinmann's dissertation.

¹⁶A *mann* is a measure of weight varying between forty and eighty-four pounds, depending on local custom. F. Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 1316.

to the Armenian merchants for the purchase of the silk, thereby facilitating their success.¹⁷

Armenian Trade at the End of the Seventeenth Century

The only monograph ever written on the Iranian economy has a few introductory pages on this period and then commences with the reign of the Qajars of the next century.¹⁸ If the position of the Armenians has been somewhat clarified for the reign of Shah Abbas, the general economic situation in Safavid Iran during the latter part of the seventeenth century has never been studied—let alone the role of the Armenians, save a few generalizing anachronisms extrapolated from the reign of Shah Abbas.

Because of this lack of information, Chardin's testimony on the silk trade at the end of the century is extremely precious. It is one of the only sources for the latter part of the seventeenth century. Jean Baptiste Tavernier and John Fryer also provide similar information. Certain basic economic elements were unchanged, such as the predominance of silk in Iranian production, and the role of the Armenians in its distribution via the Turkish route. Chardin, writing in the seventies of the seventeenth century, provides precise figures for that period. Chardin and other travellers of the latter part of the century made clear another stable aspect: the silk was carried to foreign markets over the Turkish route exclusively by the Armenians. One detail emerges which significantly differs is that the Dutch at that point directly imported substantial amounts of silk via a different route. The following paragraph from Chardin's account,

¹⁷Steensgaard, pp.323-334.

¹⁸Charles Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran 1800-1914*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.

though a little lengthy as a quotation, is so rich in information that it cannot be summarized:

Silk is the Staple commodity of *Persia*. They get some in the Province of *Georgia*, of *Corasson*, and *Caramania*, but especially in *Guilan*, and *Mezenderan*, which is *Hircania*. They compute that *Persia* brings yearly two and twenty thousand bales of *Silk*, each Bale weighing two hundred and seventy Pound Weight; the *Guilan*, ten thousand; *Mazendaran*, two thousand; *Media* and *Bactria*, three thousand a piece; that part of *Caramania*, called *Caraback*, and *Georgia*, each of them two thousand; and that Account increase every Year, because *Silk* improves continually. There are four sorts of *Silk*; the first, and the worst, is called *Chirvani*, because it comes chiefly from *Chirvan*, a town of *Media*, near the *Caspian* Sea, it is a thick and rough *Silk*, and the coarsest thread of the shell; It is what they call *Ardache* in *Europe*. The Second, which is a Size better, is called *Karvari*, i.e. an Ass-load, to denote the type of *Silk*, which the Unskillful buy: We call it *Legia*, in our Country, probably from the word *Legian*, a small town of *Guilan*, on the Sea, where none but such a sort of *Silk* is made. The third is called *Ketcoda Pesend*, as tho' one should say, the Citizen sort, which name the *Persians* give to all things of a middling Character. The Fourth, is called *Charbaffe*, i.e. *Brocade Silk*; because the best *Silk* is used for those rich Goods. The Abundance of the *Persian Silk* exported is too well known, to say much of it. The *Dutch* import of it into *Europe* to the value of near six hundred thousand Livres, by the *Indian* Sea; and all the *Europeans* who trade in *Turkey* Import nothing more valuable than *Persian Silks*, which they buy of the *Armenians*. The *Muscovites* import it likewise.¹⁹

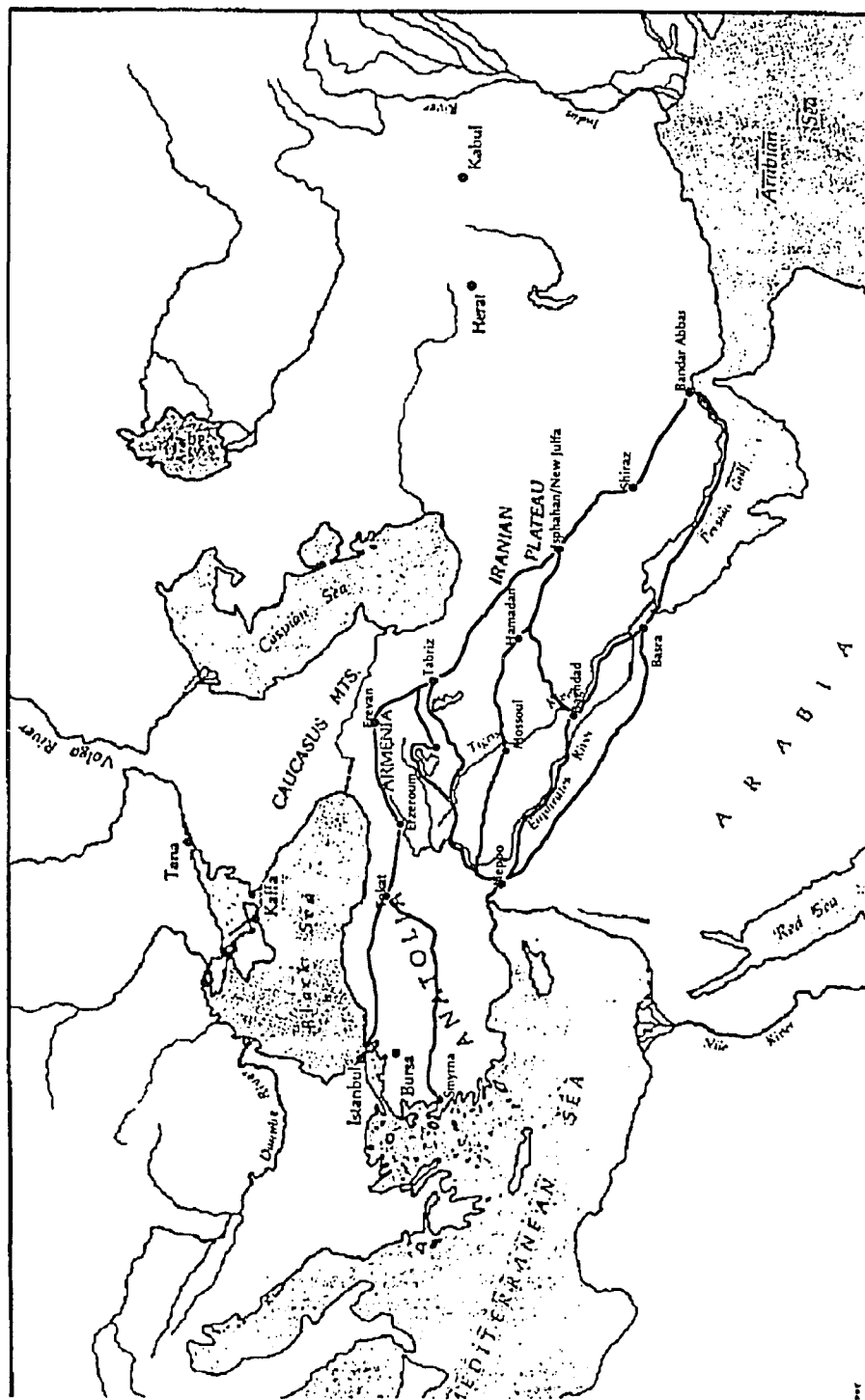
Few passages could so magnificently compensate for the silence of the Persian sources on late Safavid trade: precise figures for the production of silk by region, every grade of silk and its equivalent name in Europe (clear evidence that all grades, no matter how coarse, were exported), the major exporters and their habitual routes. Better still, the reaffirmation that the Armenians were still playing the same unique role over the same route: the Turkish route. It is unfortunate not to have the precise figures for the silk sold by the Armenians, as he so cordially offers the reader a figure for the Dutch exports. The passage also reports that the Dutch used the alternate sea route, and did not have recourse to the Armenians. Instead, they seem to have bought their silk

¹⁹Chardin, English edition, 1988, p. 282.

directly in Persia. Greater precision about the Dutch will be provided a little further, when the role of the European Companies is discussed

There are clear indications in these sources that the Armenian community of New Julfa was certainly as well established and prosperous at the end of the century under the reign of Shah Abbas II and his successor. However, Chardin recounts several events which speak of an altered, more awkward political situation for the community. In 1673, the Armenians were ordered to convert to Islam *en masse*, as their *Kalantar* had. The Catholic church simultaneously was exerting like pressure on them.²⁰ In other, Armenian, sources, there are clear indications that they were seeking opportunities elsewhere, and that their relationship to the Persian court was no longer a privileged one. The travellers do not seem to have been aware of these efforts by the Armenians. Their contacts with Tsar Alexei, their treaty with him in 1667, and their settlement in Bengal in 1665, are all part of the same pattern: the necessity to establish wider economic and political interests, and seek greater security elsewhere.

²⁰See the end of Chapter II in this study.



The traditional Turkish routes, elaborated from the itineraries followed by J. B. Tavernier's four trips, and the two trips of Jean Chardin. See Appendix A.

The Russian Route

Chardin's testimony demonstrates clearly the importance of the traditional Turkish overland route for the export of Persian silk. In the middle of the century, there were attempts to use an alternate route, via Russia to Arkhangelsk and the Baltic sea. The first itinerary may be referred to as the Astrakhan–Moscow–Arkhangelsk road. The situation of the Armenians of New Julfa during the second half of the century might offer an explanation for the timing of the Armenian overtures to the Russian Tsar, Alexei, starting in 1659.

The political situation of the Armenian community in Isphahan has been examined in detail at the beginning of this study. It will be recalled that the French edition of Chardin yielded three episodes of great interest during the reign of Shah Suleyman, also known as Safi II (r. 1666-94). In 1673, the Armenian *Kalantar*, one of the richest merchants of New Julfa, and head of his community, converted to Islam. He was thereafter known as Agha Mohammad Piri. Chardin then relates that all Armenians subsequently were ordered to convert. They narrowly escaped conversion by pointing out to the Shah their position as exporters of silk to Christendom:

The Prime Minister sent for them and told them that “the King had a great zeal for their conversion, and as for himself, it would be the greatest joy of life and his ministry if they were to embrace the true religion.” They answered trembling that “His Majesty had a world of Moslem slaves and that he could through His Goodness let the lowest of all his slaves live in the religion of the Prophet Jesus, and leave them their churches where they did nothing more often than pray for the life of His Majesty and his ministers.” They also let it be understood that if they converted, their couriers who were in Europe would not come back, and that this would cause the State the loss of immense wealth.²¹

²¹ Jean Chardin, *Maspero edition*, v. II. pp. 234-5.

The information found in Chardin about the religious pressure under which the Armenians found themselves is further corroborated by other sources. The *farmān* of 1671, ordering the taxation of all of the Armenian churches of the suburb of Isphahan, has been discussed earlier, and is reproduced in Appendix B.²² Traditionally, the churches had been exempt of all taxation. The Katholikos was taxed, but the churches had been allowed a dispensation up to this point. The financial strain this produced was substantial, but relatively minor, compared to the political stress created by the fear of forced conversion. To add further pressure, the Roman Catholics, through the Capuchins, were also exerting pressure to convert the Armenians.²³ Stated simply, the situation for the Armenian community was very difficult. The hostile climate which seems to have reached its culmination under Shah Safi II, in fact began more than a decade before the *farmān* of 1671's taxation of the churches or the conversion of the *Kalantar* in 1673. The segregation of the Armenians into separate areas by Shah Abbas II, already described at length, signalled the prelude to a stricter religious policy toward the Armenians. Although Shah Abbas II's brutal displacement of the Armenian population from the center of town (1655-1657) to the suburbs did not directly displace any wealthy merchant families already inhabiting New Julfa, it marked a turning point for all Armenians.²⁴

It is therefore difficult to believe that the first Armenian diplomatic overtures to the Tsar of Russia in 1659 were coincidental. As a first step taken, they offered Tsar Alexei a magnificent gift, a throne decorated with precious stones. The negotiations eventually culminated in the signing of an important treaty between the Armenian

²²In Ter Yovhancanc', volume II, pp. 267-71.

²³This can also be found in Chardin's French edition, but the role of the Catholics will be discussed at length further when the relations with France are examined.

²⁴All of this has been analyzed in detail in chapter II of this dissertation.

merchants of New Julfa and the Russian Tsar in 1667. The Tsar granted them permission to commerce via the northern route to Europe, through Russian territory. A privilege the European Companies had long wished to obtain, but which remained beyond their grasp. In that instance, the political disadvantages of the Armenians' situation had been in their favor. The Tsar was adamant about not granting permission to another nation lest they should attempt to interfere in Russian affairs or be detrimental to Russia's economic interests. He had no such fears of the Armenian merchants, for they politically were in no position to threaten Russia.²⁵

At the time, Armenians were already travelling that route, mainly merchants from Transcaucasia dealing in furs.²⁶ The furs were the main export of Russia and Northern Europe to Transcaucasia. The usual European goods, cloth, lace, watches, eye glasses, magnifying glasses, were imported to Russia whence they were transported by the Armenian merchants of Transcaucasia.²⁷ These Transcaucasian merchants were, however, another assemblage of different family associations quite distinct from the merchants of New Julfa and their Company. The principle imports of Iran into Russia were: crude silk, different kinds of woven silks, camel wool, rugs, precious stones, jewelery and gold, incense, coffee, indigo and spices. Some of these goods were Indian imports into Iran via the Indian Ocean, Bandar Abbas, and then the inland route. This was the route described in detail earlier which Hovannes followed on his way to India.

The Armenian Company's overtures to the Tsars, if discussed at all, are portrayed as purely commercial in nature. The treaty itself has been taken to confirm the opening

²⁵The archives on Armeno-Russian relations have been published, they have been studied by Baybourtian and S. Xačikyan.

²⁶See Zacharia Akoulesc'i.

²⁷Susan Xačikyan, p. 6.

of the northern route for the Persian silk trade, as a replacement for the Turkish road. For the moment, there exists little proof that the treaty was immediately effective. Chardin and Tavernier, both writing a few years after the treaty was signed, still find the Armenians on the Turkish route.²⁸ Perhaps the treaty needs to be considered a little differently—as a new alliance for the Armenians of New Julfa in a period of great uncertainty. The Tsar was the only non-Catholic Western power of importance which represented any immediate threat to the Persians or Ottomans. The Armenians of New Julfa were under religious pressure from both the Shi'ite court of Persia and the Catholic powers such as the pope and Louis XIV. The high taxes demanded by the Ottomans for transit across their territory added still more impetus for a treaty with the Tsar.

There is, however, a concrete reason that the Armenians could not use the Astrakhan–Moscow–Arkhangelsk route immediately after 1667. Political instability and revolts in Russia rendered the route unsafe. The treaty was renewed in 1671, and as was seen, signed by twenty-two Armenians, the *kalantar*, the *ustabashi*, and the twenty neighborhood representatives²⁹ that formed the Company of New Julfa. That *kalantar* was the same Agha Piri whose conversion is described by Chardin two years later. The New Julfa mission to Russia was headed by an ambassador by the name of Grikor Lusikenc'. In 1673, Grikor Lusikenc' swore on the Holy Bible that the land route through Turkey would be abandoned, and that the New Julfa merchants would transport all their silk loads exclusively to Russia.³⁰ There were several political

²⁸See quotation of note 14 above for Chardin and a quotation about Smyrna from Tavernier in the preceeding chapter.

²⁹We have no direct access to the Armeno-Russian documents although they are published but they have been studied. See Susan Xaç'ikyan, all of chapter I or her summary on p. 45.

³⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 47-49.

upheavals and wars, in which the Ottomans were engaged, which may easily explain why the Armenians contemplated abandoning the Turkish route.

There also was an internal rebellion which was even more disruptive than the Celali uprisings of the preceeding century, which affected the main centers of trade in Anatolia: the revolt of a certain Abaza Hasan who had successfully rallied thousands of troops to his cause. He declared himself ruler of Anatolia. The supression of his rebellion was led by the Grand Vizier Mehmet Köprülü, and ended in a blood bath at Aleppo on February 16, 1659. Offered a false truce by the Vizier, Abaza Hasan accepted an invitation to a banquet in Aleppo where his followers were all massacred. This marked the beginning of a period during which the Grand Vizier sent agents throughout Anatolia supressing and killing all those considered "suspicious." Janissaries, teachers, judges, members of the 'ulamā and merchants alike, about 12,000 of them, were arrested and sent back to the capital.³¹

The turmoil in Anatolia contributed to the disruption of trade, but more important were the foreign wars in which the Ottomans were engaged. There was not simply the usual hazards of the roads during turbulent times, or the usual danger inherent in navigation of the Mediterranean during one of the many wars with Venice. The Grand Vizier's radical policies did more damage to the silk trade during this war against Venice, than the conflict itself. Hearing of a Frenchman having aided Venice in the struggle for Crete, he promptly severed relations with France, despite France's long friendship with the Porte and its long-established commercial privileges there.³²

Tavernier's testimony that the Armenians preferred to sell silk to the French for cash, rather than to sell it to the English or the Dutch, who required that they take cloth

³¹All the factual information on the Ottoman Empire in this chapter is from: Stanford Shaw, *History of The Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. I, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978).

³²The capitulations of October 8th 1569 to France had been renewed in 1590 and remained in power. France was the first to obtain them, followed by Venice. The English with the Levant Company obtained capitulations in 1590.

in payment, has been quoted in full in an earlier chapter.³³ That passage demonstrates that the French merchants were the favored clients of the New Julfa merchants. French commercial privileges, as well as those of Venice, were not restored until 1669. It seems a reasonable interpretation that the absence of the French and the Venetians from trade centers, such as Aleppo and Smyrna, encouraged the Armenians to seek an alternate route. In 1689, Peter the Great gave the Armenians of New Julfa monopoly over the northern route.³⁴ The question remains as to whether this new route was ever used. Heavy taxation provided the Ottomans great financial benefit from Armenian transit trade. The Russians also imposed a tax on Armenian traders, although it was not substantial. Proof for the use of the northern route must be found elsewhere than in an analysis of the international political situation.

The Russian Route versus the Turkish Route

There is an Armenian source that seems to confirm that the Russian route was widely used. The manual, written by Łucas Vanandec'i for the use of other merchants, and entitled *Ganj č'apoy, kšroy, t'woy ew dramī blor ašxarhi* (*A treasury of measures, weights, numbers and moneys from the whole world*), was published in Amsterdam in 1699.³⁵ Beyond weights, measures and currency exchanges across the

³³See the chapter on merchant organization, under the section Modes of Remuneration and Payment.

³⁴Xač'ikyan, Susan p.45

³⁵Łucas Vanandec'i , Ganj č'apoy , kšroy, t'woy, ew dramīc' bolor ašxarhi. Or č'gitut'win amenayn tesak č'apoc', kšroc', ew dramīc' orov bolor ašxarhi vač'arakanut'iwn vari. žolovyal ew i mi vwayer havak'cal ašxatut'camb Łukasū abašnorh jankali Vnandec'woy. Caxiwk ew i xndroy hayc'man hatc'man Julayec'i Xač'aturi ordi Paron Petrosin. Tpiwk ew hawanut'cambēramec' vehi Tomay vardapeti ew srbap'ayl episcoposi Vanandec'woy Tann Golt'neanc'. yAmi team. 1699, yunvari 16. y Amsterdam. [A Treasury of measures, weights, numbers, and moneys of the whole world. Or knowledge of all sorts of weights, measures and moneys that rule the commerce of the whole world. Assembled and collected within the same work by the work of Lucas of Vanand. At the expense and request of Peter son of Khatchadour of Julfa published under the direction of the sublime doctor bishop Thomas of Vanand of the house of Golt'n in Amsterdam in the year 1699 on January 16.]

world it contains the most frequently used itineraries. The Russian route is described at length. It is worth reproducing the table of contents for chapter II entitled *History of Commerce*. In one lengthy paragraph, most of the important localities for Armenian trade at the end of the century are enumerated. The Russian route is included among them:

History and Commentary on Commerce:

Modality of commerce, taxes measures used for different merchandises, in Indostan, in Surat. Prices of Marsiles and other moneys imported. Modalities of commerce, moneys used in Gujerat, Aurangabad, Sagar, Haiderabad. Moneys used in Pegu and Ava. Moneys and weights in Zirbad, Cochin, Ceylan, Mallaca, Djakarta, Tornado, Amboine, Timora, Solor, Manilla. Moneys and weights used in and found in Manilla, Charinov and Mascot.

Customs and taxes perceived in Bandar Abbas. Modalities of commerce in Persia. Weights used in Guilan, Gaskar, Keshm, Recht, Lahijan, Lashtarneshan, Erivan and Tauris.

Moneys and weights used in Moscow. Merchandise that can be sold in Moscow or that can be bought there. Custom perceived on silk in Astrakhan. Price of transportation to Arkhangelsk. The price of gold and silver, and cloth brought back from Amsterdam. Price of transportation from Arkhangelsk, Novgorod, Solensk to Moscow. Transport from Moscow to Astrakhan and beyond. Equivalent of weights used in Moscow.

Modalities of commerce, taxes, measures used for different merchandises in Bassorah, Bagdad, Aleppo; Constantinople, Smyrna, Romania; In Livorno; Venice; Amsterdam. The fame of Amsterdam, its imports. Tariffs of merchandises sold in Amsterdam the 21st of March 1699. Tariffs of Insurance; interest rates, short and long term; exchange rates.³⁶

This document enumerates most of the main Armenian trade centers (excluding Europe and "Arabia" which are in the next chapters of the *Ganj*) for the end of the century. It is notable that the Turkish route is still included along with the Russian route. There is a problem with this source: the date of the manuscript is not apparent, only its date of publication. The year chosen for the tariffs was the most recent one at

³⁶This manual is no. 19839 of the Nubar library of AGBU of Paris. It has been first noticed by Braudel and then first discussed by K. Kévonian: "Marchands arméniens au 17ième siècle." *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, 16, (1975): 199-244.

publication—the twenty-first of March 1699, the twenty-first of March being considered the first of the year, characteristic of the *Azaria* calendar of New Julfa. The language used is the heavily persianized dialect of New Julfa, which would have been incomprehensible to other Armenian merchants. There is no doubt that this was written by a merchant of New Julfa for the benefit of other merchants in his own community. A critical study of this manuscript remains to be done, although some possible sources for it have been identified by the French scholar who first brought this manual to light in 1975.³⁷

Another very clear piece of evidence for the survival of the Turkish route is the contents of the fleeting engagement between the Armenians and the English East India Company in 1688,³⁸ in which it is clearly stated that the Armenians should not take their silk to Aleppo, but redirect it to India for transport by the ships of the English Company. It should be pointed out that the Armenian signed their agreement with Peter the Great in 1689, just one year after they concluded the above with the English. The consequences of the treaty with the English will be examined further on. The information the manual provides concerning the Russian route is too precious not to mention.

The Armenian Trade in Russia

The manual gives the precise tax set by the Russians on Persian silk transported to Moscow: “whoever wants to transport silk to Moscow, has to have it weighed in

³⁷Keram Kévonian.

³⁸R. W. Ferrier, "The Agreement of the East India Company with the Armenian Nation 22nd of June 1688." *Revue des études arméniennes*, 7(n.s.) (1970): 427-43.

Astrakhan, each *poud*³⁹ of silk is counted to cost 1 *T'uman* 6000 *dian*.⁴⁰ Fifty *dian* of custom is taken for each 1000 *dian*.⁴¹ This clearly sets the tax on silks for Moscow at five percent. Apparently, if the silk was sold in Astrakhan, the tax on it was a little lower: "If you want to sell silk in Astrakhan you have to pay 45 *dian* of customs for 1000 *dian*."⁴² The price of transportation is marked for each stop on the itinerary as well. "From Astrakhan to Moscow it comes to 1000 *dian* a *poud*."⁴³ From Moscow to Arkhangelsk 300 *dian* of transportation per *poud*.⁴⁴ This was the circuitous route taken to Amsterdam. On their return, the New Julfa merchants transport goods bought in Amsterdam. The return itinerary also is plotted: from Amsterdam to Arkhangelsk to Novgorod then Smolensk one travels tax free, but pays 500 *dian* in transport. Goods from Amsterdam are taxed in Moscow, he says, according to the "King of the Russians." The route from Moscow to Astrakhan is also tax free on the return trip. All taxes were paid in silver, or, when they were not, the merchant had to forfeit 205 *dian* of the merchandise per 1000 as payment, which is more than one fifth of the total value.

The goods brought back from Amsterdam were silver and gold coins, and cloth. The merchandise bought in Moscow comprises various different furs such as fox, hare, black beaver, and more importantly sable, quicksilver, candle wax, Russian vellum, also called Bulgarian leather, and fish teeth complete the list, and are said to

³⁹A little further in Luca he says. the *poud* is worth 40 *grvak*', 5200 *dirham*, 3466 *miskal*. It is roughly equivalent to 15 kg. This measure is found in Hovhannes as unit of measurement for tobacco as well as thread. See the dictionary of weights and measures by P'ap'azyan in Hovhannes' account book.

⁴⁰The toman was equivalent to 306.4 gr of silver; there were 1000 *dians* to the toman. Levon Khachikian, *registre*, p.267.

⁴¹Lucas Vanandec'i p.37.

⁴²*Ibid*.

⁴³*Ibid*.

⁴⁴*Ibid*., p. 38.

have unstable prices. Persian silk in two qualities was the main export to Moscow: He calls the first lower quality of silk *k'nar*, though this is probably not the lowest quality silk, *laijani*, referred to by Chardin as *legia*, but the next higher quality as it is only a little cheaper than the *sharbafi*, or silk brocade. Chardin calls this median quality *katkhoda passand* in Persian. The other import is the best silk available, the *sharbafi*. The other goods sold in Moscow were tinted goat skins for saddles and bridles, cloths from the town of Lakayur, calicos, dotted cloth (in Persian *chashma būlbūli*, meaning the eye of the nightingale as an analogy for dark black dots. This poetic image is used both for beans and cloth in Persian, the English 'polka dot' is a sad equivalent), cheap cloth for covering merchandise, taffeta from Kachan, taffetas from Guilan, tinted leather from Tabriz, cooked thread from Tabriz, tinted thread from Shamakhi.⁴⁵ Again, as with the account book of Hovhannes, recognizing the various kinds of merchandise requires recourse to a Persian lexicon, after reconverting the Armenian alphabet into Persian. Although there are some Turkish terms, Persian words predominate.

Just which route was used most frequently over the years is a question that cannot be answered. There are no sources which correlate quantities of silk transported via each route at different dates. All the available sources can point to is that at the end of the century both routes were used. The *Ganj* of Łucas Vanandec'i offers irrefutable proof of the use of the Northern route. It cites the Turkish and Russian routes side by side. Chardin verifies the use of the Turkish route in the seventies, but also states that the Muscovites import silk.⁴⁶ In fact, there is a long description of a visit by the Muscovite ambassador to the Persian Shah during Chardin's stay in 1673. Clearly, the object of the visit was trade. From what one can deduce from the description, the

⁴⁵A lot of work was done by Keram Kévonian to decipher and recognize some of the goods cited here. There are several places where my translations disagree with his. In the case of *Legia* silk, for example, his hypothesis is different; see p. 205 of his article, or the *chashma būlbūli* cloth.

⁴⁶See a quotation concerning silk importations earlier in this chapter.

ambassador was accorded the highest honors by the Shah. Apparently, the ambassadors of Muslim countries were received in the morning, and all the Christian Ambassadors were scheduled for the afternoon. There arose a quarrel between the Muscovite ambassador, the agents from the recently formed French East India Company, and of course the English Company's agent, for the first audience, which reflected the highest position. All knew how significant protocol was in Persia. The Muscovite Ambassador was officially granted the first audience, followed by the French agent.⁴⁷ The French position will be discussed at length later. Suffice it to say here that the two scholars who have discussed the Armeno-Russian treaty mentioned above have examined it in isolation, without taking into account the Persian court. Armenian incentives alone might not suffice to explain the initiative. A clear connection was established between the two courts at the same time the Armenian treaty of 1667 became effective in 1673. It is at this date that the Armenians of New Julfa swore to abandon the Turkish route. Whether they fulfilled their promise is difficult to evaluate from the sources available. It would be presumptuous to come to definitive conclusions about the origins of the Armeno-Russian treaty. Their difficult situation, described earlier, might have been the main incentive. The Persian policy toward the Tsar might have contributed. It is also possible to disregard the foregoing and simply point to the fact that the silk transported via the Northern route was taxed at five percent; meaning, the northern route might have been more lucrative.⁴⁸ On the other hand, it is evident that to obtain permission for trade where the European Companies had failed was an achievement in itself. Therefore the continuing competition with the Companies was another possible incentive.

⁴⁷Chardin, English edition, p. 80-115.

⁴⁸The lowest it had ever been was 6%. The Europeans with capitulations, such as the French, paid less. They paid 3% and still never managed to compete.

One clue as to why the Turkish route continued to be used in light of the viability of the Russian route may be the last segment of the journey beyond Moscow. The Volga river had been the traditional route of exchange between Russia and Persia. At times when the Volga was unsafe for navigation due to piracy or unstable political conditions, the alternate route was by sledge in winter, cart in summer, overland between Moscow and Tsaritsyn (Volgograd). For the journey south from Tsaritsyn, the goods were shipped on large river boats (capacity of 45 tons) with a crew of fifteen to twenty people. From Astrakhan, the final stretch of the journey was to navigate the Caspian Sea in shallow draft sailing vessels. This stretch between Guilan in Iran and Moscow was not especially problematic. The averages were, Guilan–Astrakhan thirty days, Astrakhan–Moscow took around forty-five days, Moscow–St. Petersburg took approximately twenty days.⁴⁹ The choice of Arkhangelsk, as opposed to Libau or St. Petersburg, as a northern destination by the Armenians might seem incongruous at first, but the route from Moscow to the Baltic was often blocked because of the Great Northern War with Sweden. There is no information as to how they proceeded to Amsterdam from Arkhangelsk, even in the *Ganj* of Lucas Vanandec'i.

Arkangelsk meant either navigation on the Barents Sea, which would have been ice-bound for much of the year, presumably aboard Dutch vessels; or the alternative to this, to then proceed to a Baltic Sea port, probably to Narva on the Estonian coast, which, prior to the Treaty of Nystadt in 1721, meant traversing Swedish-held territory in the north, and then finally sailing across the Baltic sea. As remarked before, the road from Guilan to St. Petersburg took an average of ninety-five days. With Arkhangelsk as a destination the journey became substantially longer. The Turkish route was not short, but it was viable, save for the heavy taxation imposed by the Ottomans. The

⁴⁹These estimations are for the first half of the eighteenth century in Philip D. Curtin, *Cross Cultural Trade in World History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 191.

Turkish route led from Guilan across to a Mediterranean port (to go to Smyrna (Izmir) took seventy days, to Aleppo (Haleb) took sixty⁵⁰), thence by ship to Venice, Livorno, or Marseille, although some ships bound for France continued on to Lorient and St. Malo in Brittany. An Italian port was the usual stop for ships bound for England or the Dutch United Provinces.

There is some question as to the viability of the route from Arkhangelsk to Europe. The duration of passage from Arkhangelsk to Amsterdam is difficult to estimate, but a quick glance at a map suffices to show a lengthy journey from one frozen sea to another. For this reason, the Baltic Sea must have been preferable to the Barents. The aforementioned negotiations of the Armenian merchant, Philippe de Zagly, with the Duke of Kurland (Latvia) indicate that the route had to pass westward through Sweden (to the port of Narva), or to the Duchy of Kurland (Latvia). His success in obtaining concessions from the Duke, such as use of his fleet for transporting Armenian goods and tax exemption on the territory of the Duchy, indicates the importance of the Russian route in the 1690s. It seems the usual route was through Narva (now in Estonia) and the Armenians were unhappy about the high customs demanded by the Swedes. De Zagly's aim was to achieve the diversion of the traffic from Narva to Libau (Liepaja in present day Latvia). Some negotiations took place with the Swedes on the matter of customs at approximately the same time, but remained unfruitful. The good relations between the Armenians and the Tsar likely explain both the high tolls the Swedes exacted, and their lack of cooperation. The following comprises the concessions Philippe de Zagly obtained from the Duke of Kurland in the treaty signed on the 8th of September, 1696⁵¹:

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹This treaty is kept at the historical archives of Riga: No. 554, file 1029. This treaty is found in full in: Roberto Gulbenkian, "Philippe de Zagly, marchand arménien de Julfa, et l'établissement du commerce persan en Courlande en 1696," *Revue des études arméniennes*, 7(n.s.) 9(1970), pp. 361-99.

- the Armenian merchants were to have their protection guaranteed;
- they were to be given three houses along the route in appropriate towns, with an interpreter in each house whose salary would be paid by the Duke;
- they were to have freedom to practice their religion;
- they were exempt from tolls and customs for four years;
- the boats sailing westwards were to carry as much Armenian merchandise as they had room for, at very low freight rates;
- the treaty fixed the tariffs and rates that would apply in four years;
- the treaty granted the Duke the right to preempt any merchandise in transit at favourable prices for himself once the four years had elapsed.⁵²

Philippe de Zagly himself was more a self-appointed plenipotentiary than a representative from New Julfa, which he had left in 1669. All his requests were granted save one: the Duke should lend them sufficient capital at very low interest in order to establish their business in the region. There is more than de Zagly's diplomatic success which is of interest to the historian. Though an interesting character in his own right, the next chapters will show he was not unique. He left New Julfa in 1669 for Paris, where, in no time at all, he managed to marry the sister of Madame Tavernier, the famous traveller's wife. He then managed, with scarcely more time, to obtain an important military commission from Louis XIV after converting to Catholicism. He was baptized, with Louis XIV's own brother as his godfather. A few years after his successes in the Duchy of Kurland, he converted to both Sunnism and Shi'ism in quick succession. His conversions and diplomatic ventures were cut short by the Khan of Erevan who ordered him beheaded in 1707, while he was on his way home to Isphahan.⁵³ His marriage to Tavernier's sister-in law indicates that he was a merchant of some wealth—for at the time it was easier to enter the court of Louis XIV

⁵²*Ibid.*

⁵³*Ibid.*

than to marry into a wealthy Protestant mercantile family. The outcome of the concessions he obtained in the Duchy are not clear. The Russo-Swedish wars disrupted the entire region for the next two decades, up to 1721. The route to Arkhangelsk might have well been the only alternative for bypassing the disruption caused by the long war.

Russia was not to remain solely a country of transit trade for the Armenians. Some important Armenian merchants eventually established themselves in Russia. The most well known are the Lazarians who left New Julfa for Moscow. In the eighteenth century they were granted titles of nobility by Catherine the Great. They are best known as founders of the Lazarian Institute of Moscow. The Lazarians as well as other merchants from New Julfa were the first to initiate the construction of silk manufactories in Russia.⁵⁴

Whether on the northern route or elsewhere, such as in India, Turkey, or Iran, the Armenians did seem to have a distinct disadvantage at the end of the seventeenth century, when they were in direct competition with ship-owning nations such as Britain, Holland or France. The sea route, however, via the Cape of Good Hope, was so expensive and dangerous that the land routes were still essential. Further proof of the continued use of the Turkish route in the 1680s is found in Hovhannes.

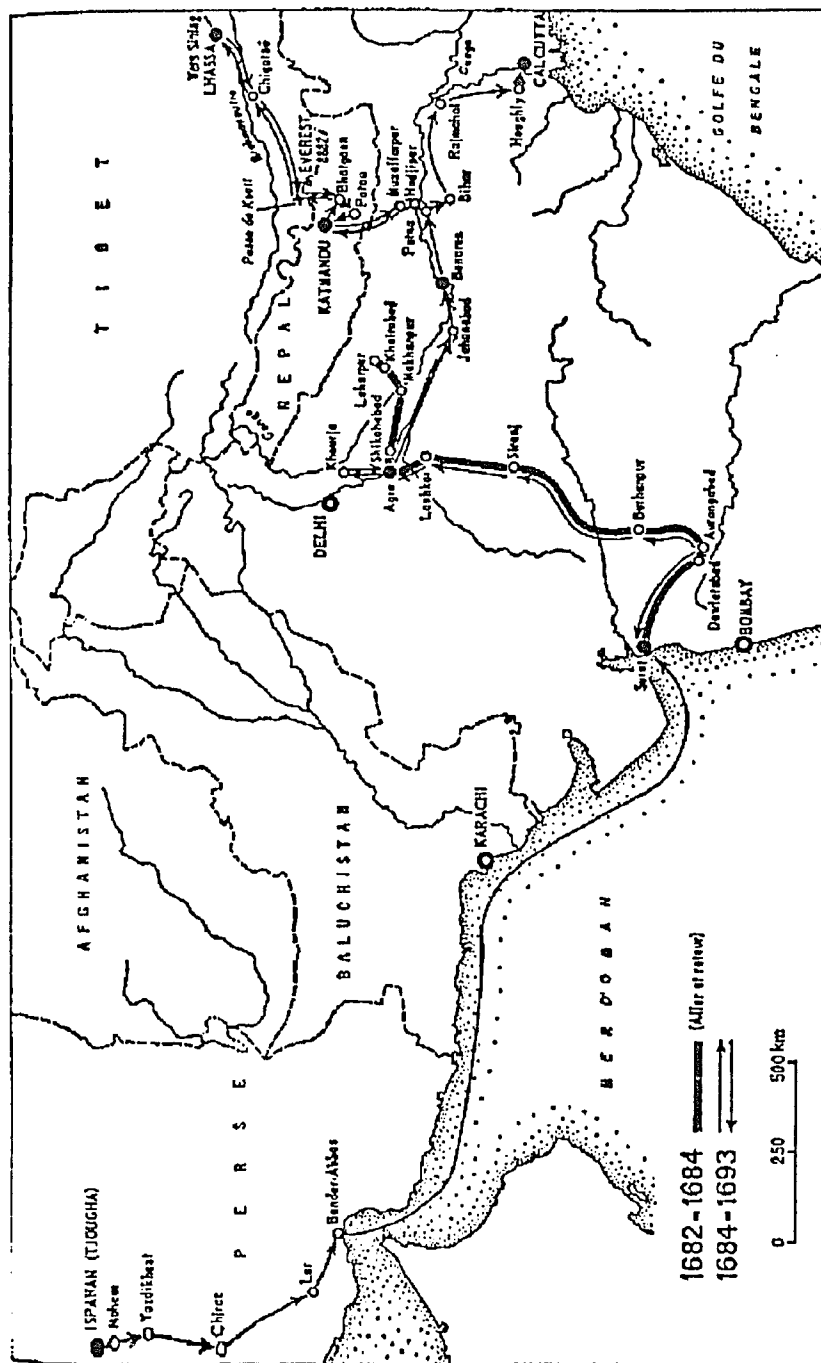
In his account book, Hovhannes acknowledges the fact that, before embarking for India in 1682, he had been trading on the Turkish route: "On the road to Izmir I lent some money to Mooradkhan; the money was given back to me in Bursa."⁵⁵ The third most important route didn't take the New Julfa merchants to Europe, but to India where many Armenian merchants, some of them originally from New Julfa, were very well established as traders at the end of the century.

⁵⁴See Susan Xačikyan's last chapter in her book on Armeno-Russian relations.

⁵⁵Xačikyan, *Registre*, p. 235.

Armenian Trade in the Indian

While the *Ganj* of Łucas Vanandec'i provides a succinct list of goods for the Russian trade, the account book of Hovhannes Ĵulaec'i, on the other hand, is an entire account book devoted to trade in India and Tibet at the end of the century. The most surprising aspect it evidences is the extent of participation in the interior trade of India by an Armenian from New Julfa. Like the other Armenian merchants with whom he constantly interacts on the Indian continent, Hovhannes does not confine his commerce to goods for export or import, such as precious cloths or stones, musk, spices, tea, porcelain, and indigo.



Itinerary to India followed by Hovhannes (1682-1693)

The account book enumerates nearly 180 items, some of them of minor importance, such as metal nails. The following constitutes a partial list which includes neither spices nor precious stones and cloth, although they comprised the larger part of his commerce: *Utu*, iron for ironing cloth; *Torn*, fish net; *Tamk dziu*, horse saddle; *Mom*, candle wax; *Mekh yerkate*, metal nails; *Danak*, knife, *Ghufl*, lock; *Jezma*, slippers; *Kaghtsreghen*, confectionary sweets; *Aloor*, flour; *Ambravi Kezez*, date kernels.⁵⁶ It is suprising to find such small articles, worthy of a local peddler, intermixed with gold thread, silks, emeralds and pearls.

The route followed by Hovhannes was Isphahan–Shiraz–Bandar Abbas, then across to Surat on the west coast of India by boat. Tavernier also travelled this well-established itinerary on his journey to India. The account book makes it clear that there was an Armenian colony in Surat. Hovhannnes notes that he attended the Easter celebration in the local Armenian church there. At most of his sojourns, indicated c.a. the adjoined map, he had contact with Armenian merchants, but he also dealt with Indian, Kasmiri and Tibetan merchants. Surat, Agra, and Lhasa in Tibet all seem to have had Armenian communities, as did Madras on the other coast.

The strong Armenian presence in India seems to date from the sixteenth century, when the Emperor Akbar encouraged their commerce in India. The Armenian church of Agra dates from 1567, though was reconstructed in 1636. The earliest Armenian tomb on the other coast, in Calcutta, dates from 1630. They were present in Bengal at

⁵⁶The list of goods as well as the weights and measures in the account book have been deciphered and translated into Armenian by H. Papazian. There is a long dictionary added at the end of the published manuscript of the account book. Although a small excerpt of the translations can be found in the articles in French or English, most of it remains untranslated, although it would be of great value to any one interested in the trade of the Indian ocean.

Saidabad, Chinsurah, Hougly, as well as Calcutta. From India they extended their trade to Birmania, Siam, Malaysia, Batavia and Manila.⁵⁷

There is a unique and indispensable secondary source for the history of the Armenians in India: *Armenians in India*, by Mesrop Jacob Seth. The author has attempted to collect as many documents as possible pertaining to the Armenians in India. It also serves as a source, albeit indirectly, for the relations of the Armenians with the English East India Company. There is an entire section devoted to the Armenians in Calcutta in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Included in the part relating to the Armenians in Monghyr is the story of one Khoja Gregory Alias Gorgin Khan, the Armenian commander-in-chief, and minister to the *nawab*, Mir Kasim, of Bengal. The first part of the book is about Alexander Zul Qarnain, Armenian Grandee at the Moghul Court of Akbar. It has long passages discussing Akbar's Christian wife, who is reported to have been an Armenian. However, it is difficult to assess the accuracy of the information provided. Stories such as the one about the foundation of the church at Agra are diverting, but difficult to corroborate. According to Seth, the church at Agra was founded by Emperor Akbar's sister-in-law, an Armenian woman by the name of Juliana, who was a medical doctor "in the European way" in charge of the ladies in the imperial harem. Akbar betrothed her to a Bourbon prince who had fled France for India. They are said to have founded the first Armenian church in India.⁵⁸

There are a number of formal documents he mentions which are of great value, such as the *farmān* establishing the Armenians in Bengal. The first Armenians are settled in Bengal by a *farmān* of 1665, in which the Emperor Aurangzeb granted them a piece of land at Saidabad, a suburb of Murshidabad. At that time Murshidabad was

⁵⁷Most of these locations are found in the *Ganj* of Lucas Vanadec'i and are quoted in a passage a little earlier in this chapter.

⁵⁸Mesrop J. Seth, *Armenians in India*, Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth, Calcutta 1983.

capital of Bengal, the richest province of the Moghul Empire, called by Aurangzeb the "paradise of nations." The duties on the two principle items of their trade there, piece-goods and raw silk, were fixed at three and one-half percent. Their main occupation was the export of the raw silk for which Bengal was so renowned.⁵⁹

It is often erroneously believed that the Armenians of New Julfa left for India only after the Afghan invasions of 1722. However, their settlement in Bengal since 1665 exemplifies the extensive measures the Armenians of New Julfa took to extend their contacts and interests, and solidify their position in the international trading system, as insurance against just such calamities. The religious difficulties the community was subjected to in New Julfa had already instigated an exodus. Since all Armenians in India were under the jurisdiction of the Armenian church in New Julfa, many if not most of the Armenians in India were from New Julfa. The influx of the New Julfa Armenians at the end of the century was facilitated by the fact that their commercial interests in India predated this period. Not only had the Armenians long traded in India and beyond, some had come to settle in India permanently by the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth. They were involved primarily in the great transit trade at Hormuz at the beginning of the century. They were also the main exporters of indigo, which they brought from India to Aleppo. During the last years of the reign of Shah Abbas, their domination over commerce in silk and cloth in Persia was extended to the Indian Continent.⁶⁰

When the English East India Company established its first factory in Surat in 1612, the Armenians were already there. Since their goal was to trade in India, the British took a great interest in the Armenians of Surat, who were already very successful.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p. 225.

⁶⁰R. W. Ferrier, "The Agreement of the East India Company with the Armenian Nation 22nd of June 1688." *Revue des études arméniennes*, 7(n.s.) (1970): 427-43, p.431.

From that time onward, the history of the Armenian trade in India has been associated from that of the Companies, especially the English East India Company. It can only be examined effectively in conjunction with it, be it to dispose of this association. After 1664, a new rival appeared as a potentially serious contender on the Indian shores: the French East India Company. Recently formed by Colbert, it was attempting to apportion itself a share of the Indian trade.

However, before examining the relations of the Armenian merchants with these two Companies, the sorry adventures of a single Armenian merchant from New Julfa will help illustrate the relationship of the Armenians to the Companies. It is not due to some strange twist of fate, but to the importance of the Armenian traders in India, that Marcara Avanchinz, an Armenian from New Julfa, became the director of the first French factory on the East coast of India in 1667.

CHAPTER VI: MARCARA AVANCHINS, A DIRECTOR OF THE FRENCH EAST INDIA COMPANY

Marcara Avanchins is from the city of Hispahan, capital of Persia and belongs to one of the most considerable and comfortable of the houses, that Shah Abbas called the Great, transferred to Hispahan from Armenia Major at the end of the last century. According to the customs of that country and the practices of those of his nation, he occupied himself with the most considerable trade of the East Indies. This occupation is to his greatest advantage as it is without exception that the nobility of Persia, Armenia and all of Asia is engaged in trade, without it implying anything derogatory.¹

The Life and Times of Marcara Avanchins

The misfortunes of Marcara Avanchins, for a time a Director of the French East India Company, were important enough to have been recorded in several documents. He initiated a long suit in Paris against the French Company. To retrace his story one has recourse to several letters of Jean Baptiste Colbert² himself, as well as letters from some other directors of the French East India Company. Several aspects of this story are also present in memoirs written by another Director of the East India Company.³ All these sources only serve to complement the most important source for the chronology of events. Upon his return to France after a long period of imprisonment, he had two long documents printed explaining the ten-year-long suit against the French Company, this both in order to explain its origins and to rally support for his action

¹ Bibliothèque nationale: Fond fr. 15529 f 451v

² Archives de la Marine B, Registre des ordres du Roy, no 17 and other letters in the archives of the Bibliothèque nationale: Mélanges Colbert, fr.23863
76-77 Inventaire de J.B.Colbert, 101 à 176 bis Correspondance de J. B. Colbert, lettres adressées à lui 1649-1677.

³ Martineau, A. ed., *Mémoires de François Martin 1665-1696*, 3 vol. Paris: 1931, 1932, 1934.

against the French East India Company.⁴ There are also the summarized minutes of the trial and the documents introduced into evidence.⁵ These three documents are all long, and in contrast to the letters and other records,⁶ they are found in published form. They were published at the request of Marcara himself. The publication of two long, and more or less similar, versions of events relating to the trial was a very costly. He spared no effort against the company. He also states in one of the documents⁷ that he had leaflets printed which were distributed to the French court and disseminated all over Paris. Upon reading the pamphlet it becomes immediately apparent that the trial had been of a wider concern. He claims that he went through the trouble and expense to have the pamphlets printed in response to the Company having previously distributed leaflets across Paris to turn public opinion against him. In his own words the object of the pamphlets is the following: “They [the Company] have produced a huge lampoon, that they have entitled *State of the Contestation Pending at the Council*, and have filled it with the libel and the insults that are familiar to them, as to people whose rule for their word is only their self-interest and their passion.”⁸

Two of these pamphlets spell out Marcara’s claims as the complainant against the Company. Naturally, they present a rather one-sided view. In the shortest one, in which he defends himself against the charges made against him eighteen years ago, he makes the allegations of the Company clear to a reader, be it two hundred years later.⁹

⁴Bibliothèque nationale: Fond Français: Marcara Avanchins, F. fr. 8972 f 192r-224v, F. fr. 15529 f 447r-480r

⁵Bibliothèque nationale; F. fr. 15529 f 481v-542 r

⁶Archives nationales : Marcara Avanchins, C5A1 Madagascar, C262 Extrême Orient

⁷Bibliothèque nationale: Fond fr. 8972 f 193 r

⁸*Ibid.* translation our own.

⁹Bibliothèque nationale: Fond Français: Marcara Avanchins, F. fr. 8972 f 192r-224v, the numbers are misleading, this document may seem shorter than it is—68 pages.

Both pamphlets also contain long addenda which state both sides and place them in opposition to each other. The pamphlets are very detailed, each of them nearly seventy pages of very small, single-spaced print. There luckily is another source which recounts the same story. In his memoirs, François Martin relates his opinions on the case.¹⁰ As he was one of the directors in charge of arresting Marcara in India one cannot suspect him of being too amicable towards the Armenian. Of course, no source is objective, one simply must attempt to discern François Martin's fundamental attitude toward the events. The other director having died during the arrest, François Martin remained the one in charge of arresting Marcara. He was both a participant and an eyewitness, albeit one with a clear bias. As such, his version can be counterposed to Marcara's, leaving one with a rare opportunity: to truly consider both sides of a story, and attempt to accurately reconstruct what happened in as unprejudiced a manner as possible.

Though the many primary sources on Marcara speak of his importance, only one secondary work even briefly examines his difficult case. It was written by Gabriel Rantoandro, a specialist on the French East India Company. His dissertation was devoted to François Caron,¹¹ Marcara's enemy, who seems to have single handedly orchestrated Marcara's arrest in India, and been behind his long inhuman imprisonment which kept him silenced for years.

It is truly extraordinary to find a merchant biography for the seventeenth century, let alone one in which an Armenian merchant's contacts and travels are described in detail

¹⁰See footnote 4

¹¹Gabriel Rantoandro *Un homme d'affaire Franco-Hollandais en mer de Chine et dans l'Océan Indien: François Caron (1600-1673)* Paris 1978 dissertation at EHESS. and Rantoandro, G. "Un marchand arménien au service de la Compagnie Française des Indes: Marcara Avanchinz." *Archipel*, 17 (1979)

as they are in the summarized minutes¹². Marcara's story, albeit a very fascinating one, has much more importance than one might suspect at first sight. Not only does it provide much valuable information on the importance of the Armenian traders in India, it also offers a unique depiction of the relationship that existed between those Armenians in India and the French East India Company. In other words, Marcara's misadventure with the French meant the end of any possible cooperation between the French Company and any Armenians in India, Persia or across Europe who belonged to the group from New Julfa.

Not only will the circumstances described clarify this further, but it will also reinforce this study's amply demonstrated proposition that there existed solid cooperation among the Armenians based both on a highly efficient organization and a family system. To those unfamiliar with the importance of the Armenian networks, Marcara's story might seem trivial. To others, such as Gabriel Rantoroandro, a specialist in the history of the Company in its early years, this obscure episode with Marcara explains in great part the failure of the French East India company in India.¹³ He arrived at his conclusions without extensive knowledge of the Armenians, but he had enough knowledge of the trade in the area to know of the importance of the Armenians in India. In his words, the failure of the French to penetrate one of the main networks of Asiatic trade, where they were newcomers competing with the well-established Dutch and the English, in great part explains the fact that Indian trade remained closed to them.¹⁴

¹²The two latter parts of both the pamphlets are summarized minutes with each trial and every date and its outcome.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴Rantoroandro Gabriel, *Archipel 17*, p.110

He has researched the life of François Caron, the Director General who was Marcara's direct superior in India, and the man largely responsible for blocking Marcara's plans in India. In doing so, he had to briefly analyse the situation in Masulipatam, where Marcara was arrested. The results of this study's research in the Company archives concur with his conclusions about the non-cooperation of the Armenians with the French. The story of Maracara Avanchins which follows largely explains the long fruitless hours spent in the French archives searching for other Armenians in the service of the French Company. No Armenians are to be found in the service of the Company from its beginnings to 1720. For their activities after 1720, one can reach the same conclusion by reading a recent dissertation about the French in India in the eighteenth century.¹⁵ The Armenians, so important in international trade on the sub-continent, are wholly absent from the picture.

The analysis carried out by Gabriel Rotrando, concerning the French in India, helps give this episode a wider pertinence, and will be of interest for those concerned with seventeenth century trade in general. The objective here, however, is not to explain the failures of the French in India. The life and affairs of Marcara Avanchins are of the greatest interest in themselves. The motivations and actions of the French will surely be present throughout this story, but the pamphlets and letters have been studied with the Armenians in mind. The second aim, is to determine the role of the Armenians in the Company, who, under the leadership of one man, cooperated with the French, albeit for so brief period. The task is much simplified as it is reduced to the role of one man and the consequences of his story. On the other hand, the story of his life and the progression of events in India were so complicated, that it is very problematic to attempt to summarize the hundreds of detailed documents devoted to them. It is hoped

¹⁵Haudrère, P. *La Compagnie des Indes Françaises au XVIIIème siècle (1719-1795)*. Paris: Librairie de l'Inde éditeur, 1989.

here that some posthumous justice was rendered to this very unfortunate Armenian merchant and his innocent relatives, if he so deserved it.

It is only through the printed pamphlets of the trials that there exists any information on the affairs of Marcara prior to his entry into the French Company. Thus, a brief summary of the objective and chronology of the trial is necessary. Since the events recounted in the summarized minutes are rather convoluted and detailed, it is very helpful to refer back to the clear summary of the trial, and of the circumstances which led up to it.

Marcara Avanchins against the French East India Company

Marcara's most fundamental purposes in going before the court were to reestablish his tarnished reputation, recuperate his goods, his pay and his personal effects, and to collect damages for the harm done to himself, his son and his nephew. The three of them had been imprisoned and tortured for five years at the order of his former superior, Director François Caron. His nephew's presence is explained by the fact that a surprise arrest took place while the four-year-old was being baptized in the East Indian town of Masulipatam. The little boy was arrested by the French at the same time as his uncle.

One of the pamphlets was printed eighteen years after his arrest in India in 1670. By 1688, he had still not obtained satisfaction.. The pamphlet mentions the trial which began in 1675, which won his cause some time, but ultimately had no effect. He reinitiated the procedure in 1676. As a result of his victory, the directors of the Company began attacking him in order to avoid giving him what was his due. They distributed leaflets, describing him as a scoundrel, all over Paris and at the Royal Court. They also started a counter suit in Paris in 1680. In 1684, as they were about to lose once again , they altered their strategy. They claimed that a new company had been

formed and that the new directors therefore were not responsible. Marcara petitioned Louis XIV to intervene. In 1685, the king pronounced a verdict in his favour, holding the new directors responsible for the older Company as French law required. As one reads the pamphlet of 1688, it is clear that Marcara still had not obtained any of his demands. Nothing is known of Marcara's fate after 1688. The documents about him or by him all predate 1688.

He claims, with many details to back his story, that he had been arrested on totally false charges. At first, the charges were brought against him in India by François Caron, who had failed in several attempts to gain support from other members of the Company. He already once had Marcara sent, chained and cuffed, to the Grand Council of the Company in Madagascar, where a center of the Company was located. Marcara had been found innocent by the other directors, as well as by the governor of the island, Sieur de Mondevergue. He was sent back to India where his superior the General Director Caron affected a reconciliation.

The charges later brought against him in 1680 were: embezzlement of a large sum from the Company, making promises to other Armenian merchants on the East coast of India to the detriment of the Company, wrongfully delaying a French ship called *La Couronne*, and instigating a mutiny on the French ship. Strangely enough, none of these charges were brought against him in 1670 when he was arrested. A good number of the documents preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale comprise attempts to depict Caron's personal enmity against Marcara as the reasons for the complainant's sudden disgrace. It is clear from the narration that Caron's enmity alone does not explain the arrest, but he certainly instigated it. Throughout their collaboration in India he had tried, without success, to oust Marcara. François Caron's identity and possible motives will be discussed more fully below.

By the time of the arrest in 1670, he had managed to rally the Company directors in Surat, as well as those in France, against the Armenian director, although Marcara

himself remained unaware. It will be demonstrated here that his troubles were the result of more than an individual order—that Colbert himself had been involved and that the orders had come from Paris. When the Company decided to arrest the Armenian on the above charges, nothing substantiating them could be found in the accounts. Moreover, they had to stage a surprise arrest during a baptism in Masulipatam, India. As he was much better connected than they were, his arrest led to riots against the French, both by the Armenians and the local merchants, all of whom were well connected to the local government of Golconda. Not only did the most prominent Armenian merchant of the area offer to pay any debt Marcara might have owed to the Company, the Governor of Golconda sent soldiers to destroy anything belonging to the French. To the rich Armenian merchant they responded that Marcara owed nothing, although ten years later money debts would resurface as the chief accusation by the Directors. Foolishly, Marcara himself stopped the rioting of the Governor's soldiers by trusting that his arrest was a mistake which would soon be rectified. The French kidnapped Marcara, together with his son and his very young nephew during the night. They imprisoned them in the hold of a French ship which was to sail first to Surat.

When the Armenians of Surat took action to save their compatriot, the Director General of the Company sent the ship as far away as one could send a ship in the seventeenth century: to Brazil via Bantam. The three Armenians remained captive in the hold in the most miserable conditions, naked and near starvation, for over thirty-two months. The ship itself was under Caron's direct orders. Finally, upon its arrival in France, and at the insistence of another Director aboard the ship, they were examined by a doctor, and transferred to the prison on land. Their hopes for immediate liberty were thwarted. They realized that Caron's personal designs had become Company policy. They remained in captivity for over two years without having been tried on any count.

Were it not for the strong Armenian family system, their very existence would have remained unknown. Having heard of Marcara's troubles with the French, one of his cousins, a wealthy merchant in Bengal, left his family and his affairs and set off on the long journey to Paris. He presented a written request to Louis XIV, pleading him to demand justice from the Company for his cousin. He obtained the audience through the assistance of a marquis who had met Marcara, and was favourable to his cause. It is only at the King's behest that Marcara and his relatives were released from prison after two years of captivity. They borrowed the necessary money to go to trial in Paris. He died in Paris shortly after he obtained access to the French courts for Marcara, prior to Marcara's arrival in that city in February, 1675. The information summarized above, and in the following, comes from two documents. One of the pamphlets in a 1688 version is entitled:¹⁶

MEMORABLE INSTRUCTION

Containing the contestations between:

Martin Marcara Avanchins, Persian Gentleman, here Counselor in the Sovereign Council of the Isle Dauphine [Madagascar] & Director of all the factories of East India and Persia for the French East India Company

and the General directors of the East India Company

Where will be seen all of the fatigues and losses of that Mr. Marcara is suffering from the part of the said Directors, since more than eighteen years, and the little justice that they are willing to do him, if he were not under the protection of His Majesty, who has had the kindness to acknowledge his interests.¹⁷

¹⁶The translation is ours.

¹⁷Bibliothèque nationale: Fond fr. 8972 f 192 r in the text this document is referred to as *Instruction*

The other version is entitled *Factum* and more simply states the names of Marcara and his son as opponents of the East India Company in a trial in 1676, followed in the same files by another document which seems to be the minutes of a trial.¹⁸

FACTUM

Containing the tragic story of Martin Marcara Avaanchins from the city of Hispahan, Capital of Persia, Counselor to the General Council of the Isle Dauphine [Madagascar] & Director of the Factories of the French East India Company in East India and Persia. Requestor of a demand presented to the council of His Majesty of the 6th of March 1676. And Michel Marcara his son.

His imprisonment, and the length of the trial, explain the eighteen years between the arrest and the printed document *Instruction*, distributed to important Parisians to reestablish his reputation. The *Factum*, and the summarized minutes of the trials, are much harder to date precisely. It can be estimated from their contents that they precede the *Instruction*, and that they both date from the end of the early eighties¹⁹. There is also a notable change of tone. In the 1688 document, Marcara's tone is much more defensive, indicating that the attacks by the Company on him have not ceased, rather have been amplified. This is the last document, and nothing more can be said of the final outcome of the trial.

A Young Merchant from New Julfa

The *Instruction* begins with the Armenian merchant defending his reputation in two ways. The Company in order to protect itself, against the charges brought against it by its former Director, had chosen the time tested method of defamation. They had destroyed his reputation by distributing pamphlets in which Marcara Avanchins is

¹⁸Bibliothèque nationale: Fond fr. 15529

¹⁹The death of Marcara's young nephew is mentioned in 1679.

accused of being a fugitive from Tuscan law, as well as of having falsified his noble origins. He is called “son of a butcher, a horse-groom, gatherer of rags and left-overs.”²⁰ The first charge seems important enough to attempt dispelling in our times, but the second, if insulting, may seem trivial. In fact, it had an immense significance in the aristocratic France of Louis XIV. Because of these charges, the beginning of the *Instruction* is devoted to establishing Marcara’s identity and recounting his past affairs, previous to his engagement with the French.

Chapter three of this dissertation made mention of a certificate sent from New Julfa which attested to Marcara’s identity and nobility. That certificate was signed by the clergy of New Julfa, their signatures witnessed by three Frenchmen who had lived in Isphahan for a long time: Raphael du Mans, head of the Capuchins; Helie Grangier, a jeweler and watchmaker at the Persian court; and Pierre Tavernier, nephew of the famous jeweler and traveller Jean Baptiste Tavernier. The certificate, with a complete genealogy of Marcara going back exactly forty generations, is dated November 1682. It had been necessary to go all the way to Persia because the veracity of the certificates previously produced, one signed in Amsterdam and the other in Venice by Persian [Armenian] merchants like himself, was called into question. One of the objections raised by the Company was that they didn’t know whether the signatories were really Persians from the hometown of Marcara. As discussed before ‘Persian’ was the common designation for the Armenian merchants in Europe. The archives have this certificate in its printed form, and one cannot evaluate its authenticity save by the names of the signatories, whose presence at the time in Isphahan makes perfect chronological sense.²¹

²⁰Bibliothèque nationale: Fond fr. 15529 f 483r “Fils de Boucher, Palfrenier, Ramasseur de chiffons et rogatons.”

²¹Bibliothèque nationale: Fond fr. 8972 f 194 r

Beside providing some insight into the mentality of seventeenth century France, and evidencing the strength of Armenian solidarity across the world, the three certificates speak for Marcara's contacts with many merchants from New Julfa in Europe and elsewhere despite more than ten years of commercial inactivity. These contacts are made even clearer as he narrates an episode of his earlier life in Italy. The following incidents, not frowned upon when Marcara entered the service of the Company, were now being used to discredit him in public opinion. In one version of his story, his unfortunate transactions in Livorno led to his imprisonment at the order of the Duke of Florence. In the other, there is no mention of his arrest, simply mention of the fact that Marcara had been unable to collect his money. The story related below is a summary of his own version of facts:

He clearly states in both documents that he was a merchant who, since a very young age, travelled between India and Persia. Later, he carried merchandise from India and Persia to Europe. He describes two trips in particular, during which he carried diamonds and other precious stones to Europe from India. In Europe he mainly worked in Italy where he sold goods in Rome, Naples and Venice. He finally settled in Leghorn [Livorno] where he continued his commerce through factors in his service, and with his brothers in India.²² In one version it is made clear that he is one of seven brothers,²³ all of whom are said to be rich established merchants in India. In Livorno, he had a business association with a banker by the name of Joseph Armand that eventually led him into trouble. In the year 1657 he provided this banker thirty-one bales of *Sharbaffi* silk [silk brocade of high quality], assessed at a value of fourteen thousand pounds [here probably *livres tournois*, the French pound] that the banker was

²²Both B.n. F. fr. 8972 f 194-97 r et v and in B.n. F.fr. 15529 452-454

²³B.n. f. fr. 8972 f 193

to sell on Marcara's behalf. There was no certificate for this transaction.²⁴ At this point, the story varies in each version. In the simplest one, the banker is depicted as a scoundrel who refused to pay Marcara. Marcara has recourse to the Duke of Florence under whose jurisdiction the banker fell. Intimidated, Joseph Armand promises to pay. Meanwhile he dies bankrupt, leaving only his debts. In 1665, knowing he could not recover his goods, the Armenian merchant leaves for France, where he offers his services to Louis XIV. He engages himself in the service of the French in exchange for the King's agreement to use his influence on the Duke of Florence, so that Marcara could recuperate his money. Louis XIV sends Marcara to Colbert, who examines him and decides to integrate him into the company he has just formed.²⁵

The second version is somewhat more convoluted and complicated. The details are the same; except that before dying the scoundrel banker, knowing that all "Persian" merchants carried a dagger to protect themselves and that it was illegal to carry any arms within the jurisdiction of the Duke of Florence, has the Armenian arrested on the 10th of July 1663. Aware that he was in danger of imminent arrest, the merchant had taken refuge in a convent. He removed from there, even though the Roman Catholic church forbade arrest in convents. Therefore, upon the visit of the Papal Nuncio, friends of Marcara requested his liberation. The request would have been made by the Sacred Congregation of the Catholic church, which according to Marcara only made matters worse. He was thrown into a worse cell. He remained imprisoned there a total of eighteen months. He escaped on the 14th of September 1665, together with other prisoners, and arrived in Paris on the 24th of that month, where he offered his services

²⁴Although this seems very fishy to the directors. See chapter 5, this was common practice among the Armenian merchants who functioned on trust. It is not clear whether the banker was an Armenian. Some names are so Europeanized that it is hard to tell. There is no mention of this, so one assumes not. Although the lack of a receipt and the banker's knowledge that the Armenians always carried knives, might indicate that he was an Armenian himself.

²⁵This version in B>n. F. fr. 15529 f 452

to Louis XIV.²⁶ He was introduced to Louis XIV by a bishop who is called in the text *l'évêque de Babilone* ²⁷. This and some of the details of the episode in Italy, such as the intervention of the Roman Catholic church, indicate that he probably was a Catholic convert before his arrival in France.

The difference in the two versions may simply rest in the fact that one is more detailed than the other on the particulars of the Italian episode. Or it could be, that since the prison episode appears in the latter version (*Instruction*) he did not want to mention it unless he had to. He confirms, in both versions, that Colbert and the Comapany's directors were totally apprised of the Italian events. Furthermore, he had entered the French Company on condition that the Company, with the power of attorney he had assigned them, would recuperate his goods from Italy. He donates these goods to the Company. This makes sense when one discovers that, in order to become a director, one had to invest in the company. Colbert having examined him for fifteen days on his knowlege of the Indian trade, and the Company directors having done so for a year, he was unanimously accepted into the Company.²⁸

In December of 1666 he embarked on a French ship *La Couronne* from St Malo with two other men: de Faye and Caron. The ship was bound for the headquarters of the newly formed (1664) French Company in Port Louis, Madagascar. In Madagascar he is given the title of Counselor to the Genral Council of the Company and is given the

²⁶This version in B. n. F. fr. 8972 f. 196 r

²⁷A bishop affiliated to the Sacred Congregation, which is further proof of Marcara's conversion.

²⁸Both versions.

Directorship of all factories in India and Persia.²⁹ As flattering as the title might sound the French in 1666 had not a single such factory.³⁰

It seems to have been their hope that Marcara, with his knowledge of the Indian trade, would facilitate their establishment in India. The other two men involved in the Indian project had had a long experience with the Dutch East India Company, but neither of them knew the Indian trade. Both men had been involved in Dutch trade further East. François Caron, designated as Marcara's superior, was a specialist in Japanese trade. Marcara had been naturalized to French citizenship, as was Caron who was Dutch by origin. The three of them left Madagascar bound for Surat where they were to found the first French factory.

Marcara relates that en route to Surat his superior François Caron approached him with the corrupt proposition of working in the name of the French Company but making personal profit on the side. While G. Rotroandro's study of François Caron's life has shown that this was customary practice for Caron³¹ and others in the service of the Dutch Company, in this instance we only have Marcara's word for it. Marcara refused the offer, taking offense at the idea. Then and there, it seems, began a long enmity which saw the Dutchman attempt in every way to get rid of the troublesome Armenian. In Surat, a French merchant was to be given precedence over the Armenian Director at a reception for the representatives from the Dutch Company at Surat. Marcara, reclaiming his rank and pushing the French merchant aside, received a slap from the Frenchman. Marcara took his complaint to his superior Caron. This minor

²⁹Both versions.

³⁰The previous August (1666), they had obtained a *farmān* which gave them the right to set up their first factory in India in Surat. The counter had not yet been established

³¹See Rotrandro's article p. 97

incident, and a dispute between Caron and Marcara over the acquisition of some indigo, gave François Caron the excuse for his first attempt to eliminate the Armenian.

Upon their arrival at Surat, Caron, on his own initiative and without consultation, seems to have purchased some indigo for the French Company from a Banyan by the name of Sanson. Marcara refused to receive the merchandise saying the factory had to be established first, and moreover that the indigo was of poor quality and overpriced. He then proceeded to purchase some indigo from the Armenians. A little later in the same year of 1668, after founding the first factory, he fell ill. Upon learning of this illness, François Caron sent in some of his servants and had Marcara chained and transported onto a ship in the port of Surat bound for Madagascar. He sent as accompaniment a letter to the Council of the Company recommending the Armenian's return to France. After a short trial, where it came to light that the bad indigo Caron accused him of buying had been his own, Marcara was absolved and returned to India. He was given the mission of founding a factory for the French Company on the East coast of India.

Upon his return to India, François Caron affected remorse, and claimed he had been misled. A reconciliation was made between the two men, with Caron giving his support and blessing for the new enterprise on the East Coast of India. It had been decided before Marcara's trip to Madagascar, by Caron's equal and colleague Goujon that Marcara would be in charge of setting up a new factory. He set out to the Kingdom of Golconda³² in May of 1669, accompanied by his servants and by a French merchant by the name of Rousell. Before his departure, the general director by the name of de Faye died leaving Caron and Goujon as the only resident Directors in Surat during Marcara's absence.

³² The kingdom of Golconda did not stay independent very long after that. It was absorbed into the domains of Emperor Aurangzeb in 1687.

Upon Marcara's arrival on the East coast of India, he employed his contacts there to obtain a *farmān* for the French, the same *farmān* that the Dutch had been seeking for several consecutive years. The obtaining of the *Farmān* of 1669 from the King of Golconda merits explanation in a little more detail, for it illustrates well the skill and influence of the network of contacts of the Armenian merchant.³³

When he arrived in the city of Golconda,³⁴ he was greeted by one of his relatives. Anazarbec, an Armenian, was one of the principal dignitaries at the court of the King. Though the text doesn't mention it, his relative had probably converted to Islam, for it was the local religion and he was a dignitary at the court. Through his efforts, Marcara and all the Frenchmen accompanying him were given good lodgings in the city of Golconda.

Marcara did not use his relative as a direct intermediary. He had yet a better contact—he was acquainted with the nephew of the King, whom he had befriended during his earlier trips to India. Through him, he requested an audience. While he was waiting, he sent out his son and some of his factors to acquire merchandise. In the meanwhile, the King of Golconda ordered the Governor of the city of Masulipatam, a certain Jarabec, to listen to the proposition of the Armenian merchant. Marcara had several meetings with the governor where he described the glory of the King of France, the grandeur of the French nation, and the merits of its Company. He showed the Governor a portrait of the King of France. The governor was impressed and well pleased. He gave the Armenian Director a Persian horse of great value as a gift and promised to speak to the King of Golconda on his behalf for the foundation of a French factory.

³³The details of this episode are best in the following version B n. F. fr.15527 f459 r -461r

³⁴Golconda was not the main city but a fortress where there was the residence of the King of Golconda. The city next to it, called Bagnagar, was one of the largest and most beautiful in India in the seventeenth century. Its site is now known as Haiderabad.

1016 si d'aujour d'aujour
de M^r de la Roche
qui ont d'aujour d'aujour.
Goujon et al^{le} de la Roche
de la Roche de la Roche
de la Roche de la Roche.

M. de Marcara, 12. Janus 1670.
Du Comptoir de Kazalapatay

De Comptoir de Hazelpaten

Monsieur

L'apologie que je dois faire de cette protection et amitié m'oblige
à vous en occuper pour la présente et de ne pas laisser passer une seule occasion
d'avoir de l'Etat de l'apologie de l'Etat compagnie française - En
finissant bien son personnel, moi-même dans l'apologie de l'Etat
d'être, nous ne pouvons pas de la part de la grande compagnie
pour le délayement de la compagnie et les avantages de la compagnie
et de la compagnie de la compagnie de la compagnie de la compagnie.

[illegible]

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1669 prob
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tista p. l. g. v. l.
de Dr. De Mena
Valgueri.

Rivaleto' Holland
fumay obtenu p^r
le Commerce.

sufrirán los
que cubren los ángulos

[illegible]

Facsimile of the first page of a letter by Marcara Avanchins concerning his mission in Masulipatam, carried to Paris by one of his uncles

Meanwhile the Dutch had heard of Marcara's success with the Governor and had spared no bribes and presents for the same Governor to prevent Marcara from

obtaining the audience.. They succeeded in this effort and Marcara was finding the delay too long; he decided to dispatch a letter in Persian directly to the King. The King was so pleased by this letter in Persian, that immediatly after its reception the Governor Jarabec came and escorted Marcara to the court of the King of Golconda.

Marcara presented a long discourse in Persian at the court of the King of Golconda. He spoke of the grandeur of the King of France, and of the French nation and of their friendly intentions. He told the King of Golconda that the French had formed a Company like the Dutch and English, but it was not in order to accumulate the riches of India, for they had enough riches in their own land, but to form a correspondance and friendship with the Kings of the Orient. The King received him well and promised to grant his permission to the French to enter any negotiations in total freedom within the bounds of his domain.

Marcara gave the King a portrait of Louis XIV. The King of Golconda, to show his pleasure, immediately ordered that it should be mounted in a frame of gold. The King was also given other presents by Marcara: five pieces of beautiful gold brocade from France, thirteen pieces of Dutch cloth, eleven mirrors, four double gold Louys[French gold coins], a thousand gold pagodas [portuguese money] of a value of more than 3,800 roupies, and three cases of the most excellent Persian wine.

Marcara also gave the Governor various presents: three pieces of Dutch cloth, and four pieces of silver and gild brocade from Persia. He then diligently reported his success in several letters to Caron in Surat.

On the 14th of October, 1669, a *farmān* of the King of Golconda was delivered to Marcara. Marcara read it and sent it back, as the concessions were not broad enough. On the 5th of December of that same year he obtained another *farmān*. It offered the most favourable concessions ever given to anyone. The Dutch had received no concessions at all, and had to pay 46,000 pounds a year to commerce in Golconda. The English had obtained concessions in 1655, but by having rendered decades of

service with their navy to the King of Golconda before obtaining them. The *farmān* obtained by Marcara supplied the French with a general exemption from all duties.³⁵

In the meanwhile, the French merchant Rousell had, in Marcara's terms, made the Company's quarters a place of debauchery. Marcara opposed his behaviour strongly, upon which an irate Roussell wrote to François Caron that Marcara had attempted to assassinate him. François Caron, thrilled at the opportunity, sent unsealed letters of arrest to Masulipatam, hoping the Armenian would read them, be intimidated, and flee. Marcara did read them, but remained in Masulipatam. He let Caron know of his resolve not to abandon the new factory at Masulipatam. As it turned out, Roussell became very ill, and repenting of his gesture, sent a letter denying his previous charges saying that much dissention was brought about by rivalry. François Caron decided to send another Director General by the name of Goujon to verify all of the accounts of the new factory and to arrest the Armenian if anything was found amiss. Goujon was accompanied by another relative newcomer to Indian affairs, since none of them had any expertise: François Martin. Upon Goujon's report that the accounts were in order, François Caron gave the order to Goujon that Marcara was to be arrested anyway and be compelled to sign debt certificates to the company. Goujon executed these orders. Apparently his conscience bothered him terribly, and he died within fifteen days of the arrest.

As mentioned earlier, the rich Armenians of the region, as well as the head merchant of the city of Golconda, who was an Indian, offered to recompense any sum that Marcara might have owed. An important Armenian merchant of Masulipatam, who owned two ships offered to put up one of his ships as bail for Marcara. At this point, the French denied that he owed any debts. Despite their retraction of the claims

³⁵*Ibid.*

against him, Marcara was arrested along with his son and two nephews. His son was seventeen years old, one of his nephews fifteen, the other only four.

They were sent to the French Factory at Surat, but were forced to remain chained in the hold of the ship, because rumors of their presence had created great commotion among the many Armenians of the city who were negotiating with the French. A token victory was allowed them in the liberation of the fifteen-year-old nephew. The captive Marcara promptly was whisked away from Surat where he obviously had too strong a base of support. His son and the four year old nephew remained captive in the same ship with him. The Armenians were told that he had to be judged according to the laws of French Justice. Marcara, however, had been arrested, despite the fact that no formal charges had been levelled against him.³⁶

There followed the five consecutive years of imprisonment already described at the beginning of this chapter. As mentioned before, Marcara and his relatives were only released as a result of the mediation of his cousin, called Jean Avanchins in the archives (probably his real name was Hovhannes), who had come all the way from Bengal to alert Louis the XIV to the injustice done to his cousin in India.

François Caron sailed to Portugal as Marcara was released to go to Paris. His ship sank as it split in half off the coast of Portugal. In Marcara's words, the treasures he had stolen from India sank with him. Marcara viewed this as a sign of divine providence and higher justice, that all involved in his arrest were punished by sudden deaths, save one: François Martin

Some minor participants in the Indian project were summoned by the Company to testify for the Company against the Armenian. Most of them, not having been paid their wages, and holding Marcara high in their esteem, refused. The captain of the

³⁶This is our own summary of the the two long archival documents described above. It is therefore Marcara's version.

French ship *La Couronne*, by the the name of Lambety, agreed to testify against him, accusing him of having fomented mutiny aboard his ship during their original voyage to India, and thereby delaying it. Marcara countered this charge by saying that he had quarreled with the captain because he did not know the way to India. It was by the captain's own mistakes that the journey was made longer. He also claimed that he had had to make the captain stop and wait ashore, until the sailors got over a bad bout of scurvy that the French captain insisted on completely ignoring.³⁷ Had it not been for his efforts they would have never reached their destination in Madagascar. Since, *La Couronne* arrived in Madagascar before Marcara was given his titles by the Company, and French Maritime law required a complete report from the captain, had there been any complaints the General directors would have known it then and would not have given him his responsibilities within the Company.³⁸ The trip from St Malo to Madagascar had lasted from the 23 of December 1666 to the 23 of August 1667.³⁹ The length of the delay of which he was accused, amounted to only fifteen days on a voyage lasting eight months.

If this instance seemed clear enough, the rest of the story was very difficult for the Armenian to prove. He did produce several documents, accounts and letters, while the Company, on the other hand, produced nothing. Their excuse is that the relevant papers and record of the Company sank on the ship with François Caron. Marcara justly countered that if the Company wanted to, they could find copies of everything in the minutes kept at Surat, and that several ships had come and gone without bringing a

³⁷This is in the summarized court minutes, B. N. 15527 f 490

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹B. n. F fr. 8972 f 196 v The route, one may notice, is by the cape of Good Hope, the only route possible then and a terribly difficult one to navigate. The Cape route was notoriously dangerous and an average was a ridiculous idea.

single scrap of proof.⁴⁰ There are other sources that add to this version of the story. As was noted, all the participants in the events in India had died, save one, François Martin. François Martin is far more well known to posterity than any of the aforementioned directors, as he is remembered as the founder of Pondichéry. As mentioned before, François Martin was sent with Goujon to arrest Marcara. As it turns out, his memoirs have survived, and are now published in three volumes. Marcara and the incidents surrounding his activities and arrest are the object of several long chapters.⁴¹

The Other Version: The Memoirs of François Martin

François Martin's memoirs were written fifteen years after the arrest of Marcara. Consequently, the director, who had rather brutally arrested him, wrote with the benefit of hindsight and knowing the final verdict of the French courts.

This man with a false and affected devotion, if one can judge by the little religion he had in India where he was master of his actions, attracted the compassion of several pious persons; he told the story to his own advantage. The name of foreigner so favourable in France because of the charitable nature of this nation increased the pity they took on him. Through his know how and by his apparent devotion he got the support of some very important people; he held a trial against the Company which was condemned to pay him very great indemnities.⁴²

He goes on to say about the Armenian's victory in court that one cannot accuse French justice of having made a mistake, and that indeed the cruelty with which Caron had treated Marcara was the main reason that the Armenian had won. He then remarks that it is extraordinarily ridiculous that he won the trial based on the fact that his arrest

⁴⁰B.n. F. fr. 15572 f 484 r-497 v

⁴¹ Martineau, A. ed. *Mémoires de François Martin 1665-1696*. 3 vol. Paris: 1931, 1932, 1934. pp.221-320

⁴²François Martin, Vol. I p.288

had been illegal and irregular.⁴³ He seems to have believed that French law didn't apply in India. The fact that he was responsible for the manner of this arrest of course explains his reluctance, for it is now clear he was the one who imprisoned the Armenian in the hold of the ship that was to take him to a supposed trial in Surat. François Martin never denied this, nor did he seem to disbelieve the cruelties Marcara suffered after Surat on Caron's orders. He paints a clear portrait of Caron as both greedy and cruel.

Most of his story concurs with Marcara's, except for the motives for his arrest which will be described further. The other notable difference is the Armenian's attitude in both descriptions. What is most important in his memoirs, however, is the realization that François Caron was a master at strategy, and only had his own gain in mind. It becomes clear that each time Marcara accomplished something, he tried to find some way to get rid of him. He took action first at the establishment of the counter of Surat. His second attack came after the Armenian successfully obtained the *farmān* for the French. In addition, his memoirs help clarify the motivations of Goujon, as well as Martin himself, who were both in charge of arresting the Armenian. Reading Marcara's version, it is difficult to comprehend why the French would behave so absurdly. The constant quarrels and dissensions retold in the memoirs explain the situation.

After de Faye's death in Surat, while Marcara was being examined in Madagascar, only Caron and Goujon remained in Surat. They became enemies, and created two factions. Marcara was of Goujon's faction, and was sent by him to Golconda. With the excuse of Marcara's misbehavior and corruption reported by his French companion, Caron threatened Goujon. Goujon was the Armenian's direct superior and as such responsible for him. Caron effectively had purged the Company of whoever

⁴³François Martin, Vol I p. 289

was not in his faction, by sending them back to France or Madagascar accompanied by reports of their misbehavior. It seems he either had more pull with the Grand Council than the others, or simply had a more cunning mind.⁴⁴

He threatened Goujon. Goujon would lose his directorship because of his decision to give the mission to Marcara. There was one choice left: to go and verify the real situation on the East coast. It was, as Goujon must have thought then, better to arrest the Armenian than to lose his own post. In addition, the implication of his mission was that he could take over the newly founded factory at Masulipatam for himself. François Martin, recently having failed on a Persian mission, saw an opportunity for himself in accompanying Goujon. They left with clear orders to arrest Marcara, dead or alive, orders given by Caron that Martin himself describes as “bloody.”⁴⁵

In the memoirs, Goujon is described as an honest and zealous man with a somewhat naive disposition. It is an accurate description, when one realizes that the shrewd Caron managed to eliminate all of his competitors at once and kept Surat for himself. Goujon and Martin took the long difficult journey via the land route accompanied by some minor French merchants and 200 guards.

They arrived at Golconda with absolutely no money. They were to verify the reports that the Armenian had embezzled some of the presents he was to have given to the King. They had, however, no introductions to the court, nor any money for the presents necessary to obtain one. They even had to borrow money for their own subsistence. One cannot help but chuckle when Martin, after admitting this, states in the same breath: “It was a mistake to chose an Armenian, whose nation is well known in India, as Director for the Company of such a prestigious nation as ours. It had been

⁴⁴François Martin, Vol I p. 227-241

⁴⁵François Martin, Vol. I p. 251

surprising and had not served our reputation.”⁴⁶ The main accusation was, according to Martin, that the Armenian was giving all the commerce to Armenians and that all the Frenchmen with him were kept in the dark. In Marcara’s version, the Frenchmen were debauched drunkards who had turned the Company’s quarters into a whorehouse. According to Martin, each Frenchman was seconded by a local Armenian at the orders of Marcara. None of them were allowed any other portuguese speaking servants or subordinates as this was the *lingua franca* in India.

Marcara is described quite differently. He is not depicted as naive, but highly controlling and organized. Though he knew of his impending arrest, he did not run away and leave them the factory as Caron and the others had hoped in Surat. Instead, he took precautions. He never slept without having at least twenty-five of his Rajput soldiers guard his lodgings. In fact, he seems to have had a small army in his service. In addition, he commanded a large group of Armenians. The story of the riots after his arrest is the same in both versions. He was extremely well connected. Anazarbec, described by Martin as a renegade Armenian jeweler at the Golconda court, the governor of Masulipatam, the provost of the local merchants, all demanded his liberation. However, one detail differs. There is no description of a rich Armenian wanting to pay his debts. The local governor forbade the French to leave until they paid their debts, hoping in this way to prevent them from taking away the Armenian. The governor expressly forbade the French to leave with him.

In comparison, the French looked a sorry picture. Goujon fell ill from the fatigues of the trip. They had no money to live on, let alone commerce. They had no connections. The other Europeans there were the Dutch and the English who were their rivals and competitors, and who surely were not going to help. Goujon died. François Martin signed a form of promissory note for their debts. Despite the

⁴⁶François Martin, Vol. I p.267

governor's orders, he managed, when the guards are asleep, to take Marcara onboard the ship *La Couronne* and imprison him in the hold.

With Goujon dead, and Marcara his prisoner, Caron had won two victories against two rivals. His third was to leave Martin, the newcomer seen as a potential rival, penniless in Masulipatam. As Martin put it: "We remain here with our arms crossed" watching the English and the Dutch go about their commerce. He adds bitterly that commerce was good in Masulipatam. Within a few months the Dutch obtained the same *farmān* the French had. All this is calmly described by Martin in a chapter entitled "Consequences of the Marcara case."

It is clear even from Martin's inimical pen that the consequences of the Armenian's arrest were the loss of the newly formed factory at Masulipatam. The situation in Surat was complicated for the French as well. The troops of Aurangzeb were fighting the Portuguese. The French, being allies of the Portuguese,⁴⁷ were not as welcome as before.⁴⁸ The quarrels at Surat, and Caron's reliance on a Banyan by the name of Sanson, had ruined the factory commercially.⁴⁹ When Caron left Surat on the same ship as his prisoner Marcara, he was not leaving much behind. François Martin was the only one who remained in India. He is remembered as the founder of Pondichéry, the factory that truly established the French commercial presence in India.

There are a few other details of interest in Martin's memoirs, such as Marcara's motivations for the trouble he went through to prove his noble origins. He would not have had access to the same tribunals in aristocratic France were he not an aristocrat.

⁴⁷This is a minor problem although much emphasized in Martin's memoirs. The French had not done well commercially and it is the real reason of the decline of their influence in Surat.

⁴⁸The first Farman given to the French by Aurangzebe dates from 1666. it was given to a certain Beber, representative of the Comapany. The factory was established under Caron and Marcara.

⁴⁹François Martin, p. 247 François Martin gives details about Sanson. He says he had been at the service of both the English and the Dutch who had both dismissed him for his dishonesty. As one remembers from Marcara's account, Marcara had refused to accept his services which had given rise to the first fight between him and Caron.

Moreover, as an aristocrat his trial would be paid for by taxes: "He passed himself off as a gentleman from an illustrious family of Armenia, so that the expenses he incurred during his stay in Paris and for the trial would be taxed."⁵⁰ Within the same paragraph his opinion about the Armenians becomes very clear:

He sent his son to Isphahan to get a certificate for his alleged nobility. It was not difficult for him to succeed, since the Armenians are capable of everything. It is regrettable that this nation is not known in France as it is in Asia where one can say there are no bigger cheaters and double-dealers, even compared to the locals in that part of the world who are passed off as the the meanest.⁵¹

In 1666, before his Indian trip, François Martin had been on a mission for the French Company to Persia, as one of three French representatives. Characteristically it seems, they all quarreled and failed to obtain any concessions. He makes some additional remarks about the Armenians in Persia:

The Armenians are nearly the only dealers in Persia; one finds people from this nation in all the commercial centers of the world except Mecca. The Armenians are skilful and capable. They know how to get the quintessence of everything, but they are cheaters and dishonest and one cannot be too careful when dealing with them.⁵²

The contrast between his vehement statements about the Armenians and those of the other French travellers, such as Chardin and Tavernier, is interesting. . The director is trying to justify to posterity his arrest of the Armenian. For present purposes, a comparison with the Armenian experience with the English Company is needed. The next chapter will discuss both problems.

As for the aftermath of the Marcara case, nothing more is known of Marcara after 1688. His young nephew, who was arrested with him when he was only four years old, died in Paris in 1679, at age thirteen. His constitution was weak because of five

⁵⁰François Martin p.289

⁵¹François Martin p. 290

⁵²Francois Martin, p. 220

years of imprisonment and malnutrition, which took place between the ages of four and nine. Marcara's son, arrested at eighteen, was ill but still alive in 1688.⁵³ Whatever reasons for the arrest there might have been, it is impossible to justify the cruelty with which these three people were treated. The details of their ordeals are too gruesome to dwell on.⁵⁴ Unfortunately Marcara is probably not the only Armenian merchant who had taken risks and run into serious trouble because of rivalry or political circumstance. His case is exceptional because he had the luck to be able to take the Company to court, and thus his story comes down to us through archives. In Hovhannes' account book, his deals in India show profit margins as high as 100 or 130 percent.⁵⁵ They could be anywhere between 70 and 130%. This may seem lucrative and relatively easily come by, but given the dangers of the profession, both on the road and in one's dealings, the final price of those benefits could be very high.

⁵³B. n. F. Fr. 15527

⁵⁴Details of the conditions they lived in for five years are vividly reported in Marcara's version of facts. François Martin does not dwell on the details but does confirm their imprisonment in the hold of a ship which went all the way to Brasil and back, for 32 months as well as their imprisonment in France for two years. He also does confirm Caron's cruel nature.

⁵⁵Khatchikian, *Levon Registre* p. 266

CHAPTER VII: THE ARMENIANS AND THE EUROPEAN COMPANIES

The second time that I came to *Persia*, was in the year 1665, In the reign of Abas the Second, and my last in the Year 1667 (sic) during the Government of *Soliman* his son. Counting from that time to this, the Riches seem'd to be half diminish'd within so little an interval as Twelve Years time [1677] only. Even the Coin itself was alter'd; there was no such thing as good Silver to be seen....If *Persia* were ruled by the *Turks*, who are still more slothful and less engag'd in the things of this Life, than the *Persians* and cruelly severe in their manner of Government, it would be still more barren than it is; whereas if it were in the hands of the *Armenians*, or those of the people called *Ignicoles*,¹ one should quickly find it appear again in all its Ancient Glory and Primitive Splendor.²

There is no question that the Safavid economy was in decline during the last forty years of the century. Did the Armenians become intermediaries for the Europeans in India, as is often alleged?³ The Armenians amplified their commerce with India and some settled there. An Armenian suburb was created next to the capital of Bengal, a settlement reminiscent of the beginnings of New Julfa, albeit this time a voluntary settlement by the Armenians themselves.⁴ Another destination, but for trade only, was Basra. In the words of François Martin: "the commerce of Persia is well diminished now [1669], particularly since a few years, that the Abbasi, the silver monney coined there, has been badly altered. All the merchants go to Bassora."⁵ The Armenians were as we demonstrated before the principal importers of silver into Iran. They were also the pricipal exporters of the Abbasis and the Sequins of Venice

¹This word of latin origin means fire-worshippers. It refers here to the Zoroastrians.

² sir John Chardin English edition p.139

³See Mesrovb Seth's work on the Armenians in India often used as a source for this statement and articles such as Hamalian Arpy..."The Armenians: Intermediaries for the European Companies." University of Manitoba Anthropologic papers no 14 Winnipeg 1976

⁴See Chapter 6 of this disssertation for the Firman given to them in bengal and other details.

⁵François Martin Vol I p. 219

from Persia to India.⁶ Exports to India from Persia in the sixties of the century are enumerated by François Martin: Silks that are woven in the Caspian provinces, Kerman wools, Persian carpets, gold and silver brocade, wine, rose water, dried fruits, Venetian sequins and coins of eight and Abbasis which if they are not altered are the highest profitable merchandise one can take from Persia to India.⁷

It seems all the European merchants having travelled through Persia during the sixties and seventies of the seventeenth century concur on the bad economic situation in Persia. One of them, however, makes the role of the Armenians in this silver blight clear: “one saw more silver in Persia than presently; and the Armenian merchants brought it from Europe to Persia where it was reduced to local money. But since a few years [sixties] they only bring ducats and sequins as being more portable.⁸ One may venture to wonder why the Armenians had stopped bringing in the silver they had brought in in the past. Tavernier writes that they bring in ducats and sequins which are gold coins. As was discussed before, Iran had an economy in which silver money predominated, everything was paid in silver.⁹

One immediate reason was that the Armenians slowly but surely were leaving New Julfa and Persia altogether. Chardin witnessed their gradual departure over his several trips. “The people began by little and little to go over to the *Indies* during the two succeeding Reigns; and at length in the Reign of *Soliman* which began in 1667,

⁶See chapter 5 of this dissertation for Tavernier’s testimony on the role of the Armenians. Under the section *Modes of Payment and Remuneration*.

⁷François Martin, Vol. I p 220 Martin’s list comes in handy here as the account book of Hovhannes is good as a list for the eighties.

⁸*Ibid*. The original reads: “Ainsi tout l’or et l’argent de Perse vient des pays étrangers., et particulièrement de l’Europe comme je l’ai remarqué au chapitre des monnaies. Depuis le règne de Chah Abbas I jusqu’a celui de de Chah Abbas II, on voyait plus d’argent dans la Perse qu’on le voit presentement; et les marchands arméniens l’apportaient de l’Europe en perse ou on les reduisait en Monnaies du pays. Mais depuis quelques années, ils n’apportent plus que des ducats et des sequins comme étant des espèces plus portatives.”

⁹See chapter 5 of this dissertation, the section on *Modes of Payment and Remuneration*.

their wealth and their plenty were found to be excessively diminished.”¹⁰ It has been pointed out in a previous chapter that there were strict rules governing the importation of silver into Iran. All the silver brought in had to be declared and given over to the mint in Erevan, or get a waiver and do the same operation in Tabriz.¹¹ This silver was coined into Abbassis.¹² The same rules seem to have applied to the importation of gold, but the quantities being smaller, it was easier to hide. Tavernier’s remark that it is more “portable” make one suspect that it was a measure of expediency. It is doubtful that it was because Turkey was at war. The Armenians had commenced on Turkish roads under those circumstances before. One might hypothesise that they did not want to leave the money in Persia, and were planning to carry it further, into India bypassing the regulations requiring them to be recoined with the effigy of the King.

¹⁰Chardin, Sir John English edition 139.

¹¹See chapter 5 of this dissertation, the section on *Modes of Payement and Remuneration*

¹²There were 50 Abbassis to the Persian Toman. According to Hovhannes’ account book the Toman in 1686 was equivalent to 306.4 grams of silver. By this time the silver content of the Abbassis must have been altered; were it not for the end of the century the Persian coins were good and had remained stable throughout the rest of the century. For coinage and equivalences at the beginning of the century see Steensgaard, Niels p.420 For the value of Safavid dinars 1510-1718 see The Cambridge History of Iran vol. 6 p.566. For the end of the century Tavernier gives the equivalence of the Abbassi with French moneys:

The réale or French ecu= 3 Abbassi and one shahi (shahi or chayet is 1/4 of an Abbassi)

The réale= 60 sols and the Abbassi = 18 sols and 6 deniers

All the coins were round, none of them had the portrait of the King as in European coinage, just his name on one side and the town of the mint and the date on the other. The copper money was more oval and had a lion and a sun instead of the name of the Shah.

Another bit of interesting information is that rarely were things counted in Abbassis but in larins. Larins were the currency of Bassora. They were in the shape of a doubled up thread of silver, about two fingers wide on which the name of the ruler appears.

8 silver Larins= 1 gold

80 silver Larins = Toman or 200 Abbassis

1 gold (abstract measure) = 5 Abbassis

All this in Tavernier, Vol. I chap. XII p.193

Other factors might have also contributed to this ,such as the temporary disappearance of the French from the Turkish trade centers, such as Aleppo and Smyrna, because of the temporary revocation of their capitulations.¹³ Tavernier stressed that the French were the biggest suppliers of cash for the Armenian merchants who sold silk on the Turkish route.¹⁴ Ducats and sequins were Venetian money. Venice, at war with Turkey, may have been the next best cash customer, after the French. Their relations with France will be examined at the end of this chapter. First, their participation with other companies should be considered.

The decline of the Persian economy seems closely tied to Armenian trade and their role as importers of silver. Their slow exodus from Persia, because of religious pressure and adverse political circumstances, such as crushing taxation, corresponds to a period when the Armenian merchants were seeking new ties. The overtures they made to the Tsar have already been examined.¹⁵ The three European Companies were present on Indian soil at that time. Much has been claimed about the Armenians being intermediaries at the service of these Companies.¹⁶ This conjecture deserves closer examination.

¹³See Chapter 6 of this dissertation under the section *The Russian Route*

¹⁴Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Les Six voyages en Turquie et en Perse*, Paris Maspero 1981 Tome I,p.141. We have used the most recent French edition of Tavernier here and have made our own translation, there is no English translation of this passage available. The original reads: Les marchands qui sont la plupart arméniens, aiment mieux vendre leur marchandise aux Français plutôt qu'aux autres nations d'Europe, parce que ils payent tout en argent, au lieu que les Anglais et les Hollandais lesaoblige a prendre une moitié de leur payement en draps.

¹⁵See chapter 6 of the present study

¹⁶See footnote 3

The Armenians and the Companies in Persia

In the last forty years of the seventeenth century the Armenians of New Julfa were not supplanted in the Persian silk trade by any of the Companies.¹⁷ As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, the newly founded French Company was no competition at all. The English were just beginning to have higher ambitions, after a period when their progress was thwarted, even at their overseas factories by the turmoil preceeding the Restoration (1660-1688). Their only real competitor, as is clear from Chardin's writings, were the Dutch.¹⁸ The Dutch themselves were involved in a war against the French, both in Europe and India, and could do little to advance their trade with the East until the late eighties. Louis XIV, constantly threatening to drown "la Hollande" in the sea, unwittingly restored its economy. The revocation of the edict of Nantes by a the French King drove all the richest merchants and bankers of France, all Huguenots, to the Dutch Provinces. Their presence compensated for the exhaustion of the local economy by the long years of war against France.¹⁹ Among those who never returned to France was Jean Chardin who offered

¹⁷This is very clear in Chardin and can be found in both the works of Merovb Seth and in the works of Ferrier cited below.

¹⁸*Silk* is the Staple commodity of *Persia*. They get some in the Province of *Georgia*, of *Corasson*, and *Caramania*, but especially in *Guilan*, and *Mezenderan*, which is *Hircania*. They compute that *Persia* brings yearly two and twenty thousand bales of *Silk*, each Bale weighing two hundred and seventy Pound Weight; the *Guilan*, ten thousand; the *Mazendaran* two thousand; *Media* and *Bactria*, three thousand a piece; that part *Caramania*, called *Caraback*, and *Georgia*, each of them two thousand; and that Account increase every Year, because *Silk* improves continually. There are four sorts of *Silk*; the first, and the worst,, is called *Chirvani*, because it comes chiefly from *Chirvan*, a town of *Media*, near the *Caspian* Sea, it is a thick and rough *Silk*, and the coarsest thread of the shell; It is what they call *Ardache* in *Europe*. The Second, which is a Size better, is called *Karvari*, i.e. an Ass-load, to denote the type of *Silk*, which the Unskillful buy: We call it *Legia*, in our Country, probably from the word *Legian*, a small town of *Guilan*, on the Sea, where none but such a sort of *Silk* is made The third is called *Ketcoda Pesend*, as tho' one should say, the Citizen sort, which name the *Persians* give to all things of a middling Character. The Fourth, is called *Charbaffe*, i.e. *Brocade Silk*; because the best *Silk* is used for those rich Goods. The Abundance of the *Persian Silk* exported is too well known, to say much of it. The *Dutch* import of it into *Europe* to the value of near six hundred thousand Livres, by the *Indian* Sea; and all the *Europeans* who trade in *Turkey* Import nothing more valuable than *Persian Silks*, which they buy of the *Armenians*. The *Muscovites* import it likewise. In Jean Chardin, English edition p.282

his services to the English East India Company, which also benefitted from the effects of the revocation of the edict.

The Dutch had concessions from the Shah for the silk trade which more resembled obligations. Chardin, now known as Sir John Chardin, provides a good summary of their position in Persia. The archives of Dutch trade in Persia are published and very accessible.²⁰ The following paragraph from Chardin's narration about the Dutch company provides enough detail for the present purpose:

It settled itself in Persia in the year 1623 and for many years its trade was only Trucking or Barter with the King. The Company unladed its Ships in the Kings Magazines, who took the greatest part of their merchandise, and gave them in payement goods of the Country, as amongst other Things, Wool, Tapestry's, Silks and Brocades....In 1652, one of their counsellors of the Indies, whose name was Cuneus, Ambassador into Persia, with fine Presents for the King....Notwithstanding which, this Ambassador made a disadvantageous Treaty for his Company. It contain'd: that the Hollanders should every Year Import to the Value of a Million in Merchandize free of all Duties, to what part of the kingdom they had a Mind, but if they brought more, they should for the overplus, pay the usual Duties, and in the Consideration thereof they be obliged to take of the King every year, six Hundred Bails of Raw Silk.²¹

The Dutch were displeased with this treaty and complied with it only in part, as it was not to their advantage. They doubled the amount of merchandize they brought into Persia and corrupted the customs officials to let it as valued at one million. Another ambassador was sent with greater gifts and exotic animals, such as parrots and an elephant in 1666. He did not, however, despite the great impression he made, manage to change the terms of the treaty. In the seventies, the Dutch, at war, began to have serious problems complying with the Persian treaty. No Dutch ships arrived in

¹⁹Lüthy, H. *La Banque protestante en France, t. I, Dispersion et regroupement (1685-1730)*. Paris: 1959.

²⁰Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatiën. *Bronnen tot de Geschiedenis van den Oostindische Compagnie in Perzië*. Eerste deel 1611-1638. Vol. 72. H. Dunlop ed. S'Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1930. In chronological order also see volumes 74, 76, 83, 96.

²¹Chardin Sir John English edition p.60-61 The bale wighed 200 pounds and cost them four hundred and twenty Tomans.

Bandar Abbassi in 1673. The Dutch demanded not to have to buy the Silk against Money, as they had a treaty to buy it against merchandize. After much deliberation, they obtained half their obligation. They were to buy three hundred bales (60,000 pounds). These were the terms that remained. All this is to say that the Dutch had their concessions and imported directly from the Shahs. There is no mention of Armenians involved as intermediaries.

The English were in Iran since 1613. Their concessions and relations to the Persian court are the best explored, especially for their collaboration in Hormuz in 1622.²² They were granted *farmāns* in 1617 and in 1629. Shah Suleiman granted the English another *farmān* concerning the silk trade in 1660. It is identical to the *farmān* of 1629.²³ There persisted a major bone of contention between the English and the Shahs. Not only did the English not pay duties anywhere, on any merchandise, they were due half of the duties collected at Bandar Abbas for having aided the Persians against Portugal over fifty years earlier. This had been agreed on in the treaty of 1623. Chardin comments that they were never really given their share and kept contesting this fruitlessly.²⁴ In 1670, negotiations were reopened by the English to collect their dues. This greatly displeased the Persians. As for English silk imports they were extremely important, and have been well studied.²⁵

The Middle eastern silks that came to England—and Europe—in the seventeenth century was produced in Persia. High quality silk (sherbassee) came from Guilan the south-eastern coast of the Caspian Sea; and ardasset, a poorer grade

²²Steensgaard, Niels. *Carracks, Caravans and Companies: The Structural Crisis in the European-Asian Trade of the Early Seventeenth Century*. Copenhagen: 1973.

Steinmann, Linda. *Shah Abbas and the Royal Silk Trade*. Unpublished Dissertation, N.Y.U. 1986

²³Steinmann, Linda K. p.110

²⁴Chardin, Sir John, English edition pp.100-103S

²⁵Davis, Ralph. "English Imports from the Middle East" in *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East*, M. A. Cook ed., London 1970, pp. 193-207

from its western shore. The normal routes to Europe passed through the Ottoman Empire—by Erzeroum or Kermanshah and Baghdad to Aleppo or in small quantities to Smyrna. Vast quantities of English cloth were sent by native merchants from Aleppo to Persia in exchange. From time to time routes were interrupted by the Turco-Persian wars, and then the English and Dutch Companies seized the opportunity to open Persian trade along the alternate route, by the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean and the Cape of Good Hope.²⁶

This paragraph illustrates the equation. The Companies were trying to open the dangerous and expensive sea route for the direct importation of silk without going through Aleppo. It has been demonstrated by now that it was the Armenians who took the silk out of Persia to the market centers such as Smyrna and Aleppo. It seems only the Dutch used the sea route with any success or continuity. The English mostly bought from the Armenians on the Turkish route. The other customers were the French. These were private French merchants and not agents of the French Company which had just obtained for itself the first Persian concessions: five horses a year and all the wine its men could drink from the Persian Shah.²⁷ It becomes clear that the companies were in competition with the Armenians. The Armenian merchants had no reason whatsoever to cooperate with them as intermediaries.

The idea that they were intermediaries comes from a confused and overhasty interpretation of information found in the travel accounts. The fact that all the Christians, including Company envoys, were lodged in the Armenian quarters, and that many Europeans were buried in the Armenian cemetery has led to the misconception that they worked for the Companies. Doubtless the Europeans engaged servants and interpreters from among the Christian Armenians. This had little to do with the business of the Armenian merchants. In a Muslim environment the grouping of the Europeans with the Armenians was more than automatic, it was a necessity, as the Persians considered the Christian Europeans as unclean, as *haram* as

²⁶Davis, Ralph p.196

²⁷Chardin, Sir John English Edition p. 115 these are the concessions of 1673.

the Armenians. The Europeans were often accompanied to the court by the Provost of the Armenian merchants, or the *kalantar*. This was an official responsibility, as he was the official host of the Europeans, and therefore accountable in the eyes of the court for the foreign Christians' behaviour.

However, it is more the situation in India which has led some to perceive Armenian mediation for the Companies.²⁸

The Armenians of New Julfa and the Companies in India

The English, well-established in Surat since 1612, had many factories in India. Interior turmoil in England, however, had eliminated whatever advantage the English had gained over the Dutch by their few years of precedence in the East. In the Persian silk trade, the Armenians reigned supreme. Only the Dutch imported it without resorting to them.²⁹

It is around this date that the two other companies, the French and the English started contemplating a new policy towards the Armenians. Competition had not been good enough. The English, engaged in it since 1619, had not managed to gain the upper hand.³⁰ The French had failed several times in obtaining minor concessions in Persia until 1673, when they were received with great pomp by the Shah. They were, however, newcomers to the East Indies, with no contacts and little direct trade. Newcomers, one might add, with rather recent troubles in India. They were allied to the Portuguese who were at war with Emperor Aurangzeb. Surat was raided by the Marathi. They were at war with Holland on the east coast of India.

²⁸ Among others Arpy Hamalian stated in the bibliography, the source responsible for the diffusion of this idea among the Armenians themselves is the narration of Mesrobp Seth about the Armenians in India.

²⁹ See quotation of Jean Chardin's narration in footnote 14

³⁰ See Chapter 6 of this dissertation, the section called the *Auction of Shah Abbas*

They had succeeded in alienating the well-established Armenian merchants on both coasts of India.³¹

Even if the French were in a sorry state in India, and their East India Company seems to be an example of inner dissensions leading to failure, one must remember their successes elsewhere. The West Indies Company was reestablished by Colbert. Courcelles and Frontenac were exploring the Great Lakes (1671-1673). Cadillac founded a large French colony at what is now Detroit. La Salle “discovered” the Mississippi, descending it on a frail bark all the way down to the Gulf of Mexico.³² The Dutch had suffered setbacks at the hand of the English, who had victoriously renamed New Amsterdam, New York in 1664. These generalities enter the scope of this study to demonstrate that the East, India and Indonesia in particular, were not the centers of European preoccupations, as they were to become a century later.

The Dutch, however, were growing very strong. In a letter to the Director General of the French East India Company, Mr. d’Thou, François Caron, recently engaged by the French and previously employed by the Dutch, described the conquests of the Hollanders, spice bush by spice bush. He mentions Abroyna as where the clove grows, Ceylon as where the cinnamon grows, Benda where there is a tree that bears mace and nutmeg.³³ For fear of romanticizing Dutch expansionism, he will not be cited in full. Up to this date, however, nothing has been found about Armenians and the Dutch Company. There were Armenian merchants settled in Amsterdam at the end of the century, about a hundred of them. The notarial archives

³¹See the preceeding chapter on Marcara Avanchins.

³²Lavissee, E. *Louis XIV, Histoire d'un grand règne, 1643-1715*. Paris: nlle. ed. Robert Laffont 1989. Première ed. 1908.

³³This letter is reproduced in full in the English edition of Jean Chardin pp. 17-20

of Amsterdam indicate commerce with Smyrna. However, they were preoccupied with their own trading networks.³⁴

The French Company's relationship with the Armenians was the object of the last chapter. There was no cooperation between the Company in India and the Armenians after the unique case of Marcara, save for one attempt which will be described below. The episode described in Marcara's story speaks for the strength of the Armenian contacts in India, even in the sixties of the seventeenth century.

Both the English and the French began to rethink their relationships vis à vis the Armenian merchants. Ouvertures for cooperation were made to the Armenians by both companies. They had serious chances for success at that time as some of the Armenians were becoming interested in trading directly with Europe via the maritime route. The Turkish route was, as has been said, heavily taxed at the time. Several wealthy Armenians owned ships, but as a rule, maritime trade was a minor aspect for the Armenians, except in the Indian Ocean where they were long-established.³⁵ The Companies owned the ships.

Even after the Marcara episode, the French were the first to attempt cooperation. François Martin gave an account of this aborted project. He says the Armenians had said they would be willing to use French ships to send silk to France directly, without going through the Turkish route, providing the French ships would pick up the silk at Bandar Abbas in Persia. This proposition was made in Surat India. After correspondence with France to get permission and make the conditions clear, the Armenians did not follow up on the project. Upon which Martin, with his usual disdain for the Armenians, states that: "their style is to make all kinds of beautiful

³⁴Van Rooy, Silvio. "Armenian Merchant Habits as Mirrored in the 17-18th Century Amsterdam Documents." *Revue des études arméniennes*, 3 (n.s.) (1966):347-357.

Saruxan, A. *Hollandean ew Hayeռ. [Holland and the Armenians.]* Vienna: 1926.

³⁵See Ferrier for the trade of indigo and also silver Abbassis.

propositions, but to create all kinds of difficulties that make it impossible to conclude anything with them.”³⁶ The question remains as to why the Armenians would consider cooperation. At the time of the negotiations with Martin, April of 1680, the Turkish land route was more heavily taxed than ever, while the maritime route avoided the taxes. Considering the high risk and cost of maritime trade, however, one wonders if it would be enough of an incentive.

At the time, Armenian trade was well-established in the Indian ocean between India and Persia.³⁷ Much has been made of the alleged cooperation of the Armenians with the English East India Company because of one source. In his work on the Armenians in India, Mesrovb Seth reproduces a treaty dated 1688 between the English and an Armenian merchant. The *Copy of an Agreement made between the Governor and the Company of Merchants of London trading in the East Indies, and the Armenian Nation, dated 22nd June 1688*.³⁸ is reproduced in full, as it is now found in the India Office. It is preceeded by a vitriolic diatribe by the Mesrovb Seth who calls the treaty the “death knell of Armenian Commerce.”³⁹ He accuses the English of having lured the Armenians, the greatest merchants of Asia, into a treaty where the only English concession was the monopoly on the garnet trade to the Khoja who had signed with them, a certain Khoja Phanoos Kalantar. Khoja Phanoos Kalantar was an Armenian from New Julfa who had moved to India but seemed to have been residing in London when he signed this treaty.

³⁶François Martin Volume II, p. 189

³⁷See Ferrier’s articles.

³⁸Seth, Mesrovb, Jacob. *Armenians in India*. First published in 1937. Calcutta: Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth, 1983. pp. 233-239

³⁹Mesrvob Seth, pp. 231

The rest of the concessions, Seth claims bitterly, only seemed alluring on paper. The Armenians were to participate in all the advantages that the Company granted to any of their own English merchants within the Company's charter. Privileges were allowed to them for carrying their persons and their merchandise to and from Europe in the Company's ships. They were allowed to reside and trade freely in the Company towns and garrisons, where they could hold any office the English could. They were to exercise their religion freely and wherever there were to be more than forty Armenians a church was to be built on the grounds at the Company's expense. Mesrobian Seth summarizes the effects of the treaty in tragic terms:

The specious terms of the Treaty, or better still the death Warrant of the Armenian trade in India had the desired effect, as they resorted in large numbers from other places in India to the Company settlements, where they established themselves, built churches, most of which exist to this date, and carried on their usual trade with Europe.⁴⁰

These words have set the tone of most references to the cooperation of the Armenians with the Company, and it has been immediately assumed that the Armenians were exploited by the Company. A recent study by R. Ferrier dispels any temptation to believe Seth's somber lamentations.⁴¹ After research in the British archives, he concludes that the 1688 treaty had no consequences at all, neither for the English nor the Armenians, and that it was not followed up. As proof of the total failure of this treaty, he cites some further negotiations with the Armenians to divert the silk trade to India and the sea route on British ships in the mid-nineties. Records of these negotiations in 1694-95 can be found in M. Seth as well in another chapter, though he seems to have ignored them.

⁴⁰*Ibid.* p.232

⁴¹Ferrier, R. W "The Agreement of the East India Company with the Armenian Nation 22nd of June 1688." *Revue des études arméniennes.*, 7(n.s.) (1970): 427-43.
 Ferrier, R. W. " The Armenians and the East India Company in Persia in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries" *The Economic History Review*, second series, XXVI, 1(February 1973): 38-62.

Furthermore, if one recalls that around the same time as the 1688 treaty, the Armenians were signing a treaty with Peter the Great [a renewal of the 1667 treaty and monopoly of trade in Russia dated 1689] promising to bring the silk trade into Russia. What is the meaning of this, one might wonder? How could the English Company and the Tsar both be promised the diversion of the silk trade? Could François Martin's opinion, that all Armenians are double-crossing scoundrels, be true? There must be, as usual, a better explanation than such opinionated slander, so dear to seventeenth century travellers. Once again the treaty with the Tsar and the treaty with the English have been studied in isolation.⁴² The coincidence of these dates is interesting.

First, it indicates that the Turkish trade is still viable, and that the Turkish route is the main one being used, or there would be no advantage to promising, to two different parties, not to use it anymore. Second, it points to a problem. The Armeno-Russian treaty was signed by twenty-two people who were the members of the civil government of New Julfa, and, as has been deduced, the Commercial Company of New Julfa. Who were the signatories to the Treaty with the English? Although the treaty is said to be with the Armenian Nation it is signed by one *Khoja*. His name, Khoja Phanoos Kalantar, contains the title of *Kalantar*. This title belonged to the provost or governor of the Armenians under Persian rule, and had no meaning in London, the residence of Khoja Phanoos.

It is highly probable that Khoja Panos (Phanoos is Seth's spelling) was a self-styled representative, similar to Philippe de Zagly in the Duchy of Kurland. At best he might have represented some Armenians. The Russian treaty was the only formal endeavour of the council of New Julfa. Individual initiatives in the name of all

⁴²The treaty with the Russians is studied by Bayburtian and by Susan Xac'ikyan and the treaty with the Company by R. Ferrier.

Armenians without their consent may be typical of Armenian politics to this day. The seventeenth century, however, had its unique opportunities. Another representative of a small group of Armenians by the name of Israël Ori offered the crown of the Kingdom of Armenia to a German prince in Bavaria.⁴³ His mission at the courts of the Western powers is tied to another very important aspect of Armenian life in the seventeenth century: the precariousness of the survival of the Armenian Apostolic faith under political pressure. An examination of the relations of the Armenians with the Roman Catholic Church implies analyzing their relations with the French. It has been suggested, by the only scholar who has studied the relations between the Armenians and France in the seventeenth century, that religious friction was the cause of the many prohibitions against Armenian commerce in France.⁴⁴ A brief but thorough examination of this is necessary.

It is important to note here that it is only arrangements with individual Armenians that form the basis for the cooperation that can be found with both the English and French companies. As such they are of no consequence whatsoever, inasmuch as they did not really involve the network of the Armenian merchants, or produce any tangible results. For the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century, it is therefore a fallacy to depict of the Armenians as intermediaries for European commerce. Throughout the seventeenth century there are sporadic instances of some Armenian merchants using English ships for their commerce. Some have been recorded by M. Seth in the seventies. Another instance is found in the French archives when the French stop a "parliamentary ship" in the 1650's and confiscate its goods. The Armenians go to trial, claiming the goods as their own after proving that they are not English. These instances remain isolated and have no real

⁴³*Histoire des Arméniens* ouvrage collectif Paris 1982 p.422

⁴⁴All of these studies are cited in the bibliography. They are by H. Kévorkian.

consequences for trade in general. The strength and scope of the Armenian networks in India are clear from Marcara's story. Had they truly cooperated with the companies, as it is alleged, the consequences would have been immediate.

In the account book of Hovhannes, it is apparent that he meets Armenian merchants everywhere along his way in India. They seem to participate in Indian interior trade as mentioned before. They brought silk cloth and silver and gold from Persia to India, as well as a long list of spices, dried fruits, household goods and foods. In the other direction, they took silk to Europe via the Turkish route, and later the Russian route. They brought silver and gold as well as European goods as the primary imports into Iran, mainly purchased from the Dutch. They slowly but surely had established themselves in India, where they traded within the system and organization proper to the merchants of New Julfa, under whose civil and religious jurisdiction they remained. That being the case, why then would they cooperate with the Companies who had to trade by the treacherous sea route via the infamous Cape of Good Hope?

Marcara's story also demonstrates the presence of the Armenian merchants in the Italian towns of Venice,⁴⁵ Livorno, and of course the town of Amsterdam.⁴⁶ This fact by now is well known, but hasn't been researched. The Armenians had been present in Venice since the twelfth century. The Armenian factory is still there next to the Ferrali bridge. It was there that the first Armenian books published in Venice (1565-66) were produced.⁴⁷ There were Armenian printing presses in Venice, Marseille

⁴⁵Venice is especially important. The existence of an Armenian Italian dictionary, designed to familiarize merchants with the Venitian dialect, speaks for its importance. The Italian words are also spelled in the Armenian alphabet. It is perhaps the first pocket book ever published on an Armenian press (Marseille). It is 65 by 90 millimeters, and is entitled *Baṛ Girk Taliani*. There is also a book devised to help in the study of the Italian language, which is entitled *Girk' aybubenic' ew kerp usaneloy zlezun italakan* Marseille 1675

⁴⁶See the article by Silvio Van Rooy

⁴⁷Kévonian, R. H. *Arménie trois mille ans d'histoire* p. 232

and Amsterdam by the end of the seventeenth century. Not all of the Armenians in the European cities were from New Julfa. One has to be careful to make distinctions as too many studies speak of the Armenians in general, without further discrimination. The merchants who signed Marcara's certificates of nobility in Amsterdam and Venice attested that they were from New Julfa. Marcara resorted to them because they did not have an established merchant network in France in the seventies. There also was an Armenian printing press in Marseille. All this demonstrates that the New Julfa merchants had their factories in Europe,⁴⁸ in Amsterdam, and in Italy. Consequently, they had no need of the European merchants.

The Armenians of India certainly did become involved with the English in India in the eighteenth century, through the Company and in other functions. Mesrobian Seth wrote with the consequences of this in mind. He thought the treaty of 1688 to be the beginning of that cooperation, but it was not.⁴⁹ Although it remains to be studied, it seems the Companies did supersede the trade of the Armenian networks in the eighteenth century. At the end of the seventeenth century, however, it is the Armenians who had the advantage, and the Companies were wooing them for their cooperation. Save for a few individuals, who at their own risk attempted it, there was no cooperation at that time between the Armenians and the European Companies.

Last but not least, their importance in the currency circulation of the whole region should be noted. As was shown, in Persia the Dutch could only barter. Even in their concessions of 1652 they had to take Persian silk against the Dutch goods they brought in. Both the English and the Dutch were strictly forbidden to take gold or silver out of Persia. Chardin reports that the English repeatedly attempted to corrupt

⁴⁸See chapter on Merchant Organization of New Julfa

⁴⁹See R.W. Ferrier for the lack of consequence of this treaty.

local officials to overlook this.⁵⁰ This was, of course, an impediment to their trade in the Indian Ocean.

The often conjectured hypothesis that the liberation movement rose at the end of the seventeenth century because the Armenian merchants were exploited by the Companies simply does not hold. The case of Marcara is the only case of exploitation now known. Scholars promoting this idea could not have known of him, because his story is presented here for the first time. In any case, a single instance might give rise to riots in Masulipatam, unrest in Surat, but not liberation movements. The following section concerning France and the Armenians seems to demonstrate that the ecclesiastics were much more concerned with the liberation of the Armenians than the merchants.

The Armenians and the French

The relations of the Armenian merchants with the French differ in two ways: first, there was a certain amount of religious friction because of the French missions' attempts at proselytization, and second, the French economy both in its structure and policies was closed to Armenian commerce within French territory. Additionally, the absence of their Company in Persia has dispensed with the need to examine their presence there, yet the issue will be indirectly addressed here.

There were never any objections to the settlement of Armenian merchants in Amsterdam, refuge to the Marano Jews of Spain and Portugal and to the French Huguenots alike. France and Italy were Catholic and thus more problematic. Very early on, in 1630, the *Kalantar* of New Julfa, Khoja Nazar, requested permission from the Vatican for the establishment of Armenian factories in Italy. He asked for

⁵⁰Chardin, Sir John pp. 98-112

permission to construct or buy houses which would be turned into warehouses. This permission was granted if they were Catholics or willing to convert to Catholicism.⁵¹ Somehow there seems to have been no great obstacle to their establishment in Italy. In the middle of the century a Jesuit from Smyrna sent recommendations to the Papacy that they should not let any Armenian commerce in Catholic territories without an express patent from the Pope. In consequence, the Armenian priests were forbidden to say mass, and were supplanted by Catholic priests who would recite the mass in Latin.⁵² There seem to have been no tangible results from these measures either.

The Armenians of New Julfa had to be extremely careful in their contacts with the local Catholic missions. An episode is described in the second chapter of this study, related by both the Armenian Arak'el and Raphaël du Mans, a Capuchin. The Armenians owed Shah Abbas money. The Catholics of Isphahan lent the Armenians money. Upon finding this out, the Shah was furious and accused them of having converted for money and initiated a policy of forced conversions. The Shah was a jealous protector and did not like any intervention on the part of foreign powers. In that case the lenders were Portuguese, which only aggravated the situation.⁵³

There was a prominent Armenian Catholic family in New Julfa, the Shahrmanians. There were other Armenian Catholics in New Julfa, though their numbers are not clear. They all lived in the same neighbourhood at the gate of the Sharimanians, apart from the other Armenians.⁵⁴ There are no details as to when and

⁵¹The Vatican archives are the source for this. They have been studied for this earlier period by R.H. Kévorkian. A little more information is found in *Arménie trois mille ans d'histoire*.

⁵²*Ibid.*

⁵³See the chapter on Armenian deportations, the section on Shah Abbas' policies.

⁵⁴See the beginning of chapter 3

how they had converted, and whether they were already Catholic when they were deported to New Julfa.

In the period which concerns the present study, there is another incident where conversion to Islam or Catholicism are evoked simultaneously. This time, though, the events are the reverse of the above. The episode is related by Jean Chardin, but other aspects of it are known to Armenian historians of the Church, and of the liberation movements. After the conversion of the Armenian *kalantar*, Agha Piri, which was described here earlier, great pressures brought to bear on the Armenians to convert to Islam. Apparently, the missionaries established in Julfa saw hope of converting them as well. Chardin relates being asked for advice. He seems to have feared that the Persian court would react brutally to any rumors of conversions. He was most probably right. As it turned out, the representative of the French Company in New Julfa offered the Armenians the promise of the protection of the King of France, if they were to accept the Catholic faith.⁵⁵ Louis XIV doubtless would have leapt at the opportunity. His zeal to convert the whole of the East to Catholicism is best characterized by his ambition to replace the Ottoman Sultan with a priest. Unfortunately, there is no space to dwell upon the rather humorous details of what is known to French historians as *l'affaire du "père ottoman."* The Sun King apparently had a soft spot for grand projects. He soon would be presented one by an Armenian from Armenia, but that is another episode. New Julfa must be considered first.

In New Julfa, letters were written to Louis XIV by the Armenian patriarch of Julfa, who, convinced that it was the only solution, offered the conversion of his flock in return for the king's protection. Similar letters were addressed to the Pope as well.

After several Conferances it was resolved that the patriarch would write to the Pope, to the de Propaganda fide and to the King of France, and to the father Confessor, all of which was executed a few days after. The Partriarch's letters

⁵⁵ Sir bJohn Chardin, English edition p.69

were very urgent, and moving. He therein set forth in very plain terms, that he acknowledged the Pope's Monarchy, and submitted his Person, and his Flock, to the Authority of the Roman Church; but begged in the name of God, that speedy and effectual Secours might be procur'd him. The Deputation procured nothing for the *Armenians*; for the *Augustins* and the *Carms*, being jealous and provoked that they had no Share within, writ to Rome, that they could perceive nothing but human Motives in this Contrivance.⁵⁶

The prosperous merchants of New Julfa upon learning of the negotiations were quite opposed to them and very afraid of their consequences.⁵⁷

The conversion of the *kalantar* took place around 1673 and these events followed it. Chardin was in Persia as late as 1677. These events are very close in date to an episode, which in many Armenian historian's minds⁵⁸ marks the beginning of the liberation movements. What is known as the secret council of Ējmiacin of 1677, was an initiative taken by the Katholikos Hagop IV of Julfa for the possible liberation of the Armenians from Muslim rule. A mission was to be sent to the Occidental Christian courts alerting them to the situation and asking for assistance in liberating the Armenians. The council comprised twelve people, six ecclesiastics and six laymen. The first negotiation was to be with the Catholic Church in Rome. The plans of the council were not carried through, for they were interrupted by the death of Hagop IV in 1680 in Constantinople, while on his way to Europe. However the council did have one consequence: a very young man by the name of Israël Ori decided to solve the problem single-handedly. He was the son of an Armenian *melik*, who undertook a journey to Europe, and enrolled in Louis XIV's army. One cannot help but wonder if he had met or known Philippe de Zagly, who around the same period had obtained a military commission from the French King. He is taken prisoner by the English. Upon his liberation he travels to Germany, rallies the

⁵⁶*Ibid*,

⁵⁷*Ibid*.

⁵⁸A. Hovanissian in his book on the liberation movements, and Ghewond Khosdegian in *Renaissance armenienne et mouvement de libération* in *Histoire des Arméniens* p. 421-423.

support of a Prince of the Palatinate in Bavaria. Israël Ori offers him the crown of the future kingdom of Armenia for his support. The prince demands a report of the available Georgian and Armenian forces. Ori returns to Armenia where, supported by the Meliks, he attempted to convince the Armenian Katholikosate to embrace Roman Catholicism. He fails to convince anyone, save the head of one monastery who later travelled with him to meet Innocent IV. Over the following years he travels through several European courts, Vienna, St. Petersburg, and the court of the Germanic Emperor Leopold I. He had also proposed a plan to Louis XIV for attacking the Ottomans and the Persians from the north. His mission fails. He is known to have visited New Julfa at the beginning of the century, where he was not well received.⁵⁹

Most of these attempts had no real consequences. They were naive political attempts to escape from a difficult situation in Persia and the Ottoman Empire. The episode narrated by Chardin had only one consequence according to him: the reform of the Armenian clergy. Once again, in this passage the influence of the important merchants of New Julfa is clear;

The important merchants of Julfa laid hold of this Occasion to make pressing instances to their Patriarch, that he would labour in the Reformation of the clergy, and more especially in restraining the loose Manners, and dissolute manners of the Nuns, whose enormous Irregularities were become notoriously Publick and Scandalous, for they were not contented to prostitute themselves, but made it their Business to corrupt others, and carry on the most infamous Intrigues.⁶⁰

The merchants according to Chardin were both conservative, for fear of their position with the Shahs, and more concerned with reforms within their own Church in order to preserve it. It would be even more difficult to support the notion that their frustrations were at the origin of the liberation movements, once their staunch political and religious conservatism is shown via Chardin's testimony.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰Chardin, *Sir John* p. 69-70

Chardin, eyewitness to these events, was, like his contemporary Tavernier, of the Reformed religion. In a letter by François Caron,⁶¹ it is clearly explained that the Catholics are not well received in Japan, after the Portuguese, and that the French East India Company should send exclusively merchants of the Reformed faith to the Eastern powers so that they never be associated with the Portuguese. It is true that if the situation was most acute in Japan, where Catholics were immediately imprisoned, the Persian court did not carry the Portuguese close to its heart. In India, the Portuguese were well-known and long-established. Moreover, many important merchants and bankers of seventeenth-century France were of the Reformed faith. Contact with the Armenians was also facilitated by this fact, as there would be no suspicions at court of religious machinations by foreign powers. The *faux pas* of the envoy of the French Company came from inexperience. The Catholic missions themselves reacted badly to it. It might not have been simple jealousy; they knew the situation far better, and might have rightly feared the consequences of such a brusque move. The Catholic missions were there, but they were under close supervision. The Persian court did not react pleasantly to any rumors or suggestions of the Armenians converting, for the political reasons that were made amply clear earlier. They considered it an interference by a foreign power.

It is however misguided to believe that the many edicts forbidding Armenians to trade in France had anything to do with religious differences. France maintained a very protectionist economic policy. Contrarily to England where the Persian silks were a very important import, France was trying to keep Persian and Italian silks out, for it had a silk industry of its own. The first decree against the Armenians dates from the time of Richelieu. The decree of the 10th of december 1622 was a direct consequence of the demands of the merchants of the Port of Marseilles, where many

⁶¹*Ibid.* pp.17-18

Armenians were commercing. The edict forbade all Armenian merchants to leave the harbour with any silver or gold. Its immediate consequence was the desertion of the Port of Marseille by the Armenians until the end of the century. After 1622 the Armenians went to Livorno instead.⁶²

In 1694, there was a formal request from the Armenians for permission to settle in Marseille. When in the 1660s Colbert decided to reorganize the commerce of the Port of Marseille, he considered turning Marseilles, the principal port for the Levant trade, into a duty-free port. He met with the strong opposition of the Chamber of Commerce of Marseille:

You cannot compare the situation of Marseilles to Livorno, because the Italians do not do the sea transportation and all the sea transportation is done by foreigners; In Marseille the commerce with the Levant was done by the Marseillais; to give Marseille a franchise would be to ruin French navigation, in Livorno the Italians have to resort to foreigners to arm a ship for the Levant.⁶³

In consequence of their fear of losing the monopoly over the commerce of the Levant granted to them by the protectionist edict of 1622, the merchants of Marseilles demanded that a tax of twenty percent be levied on all merchandise brought into the port on foreign ships, or on all merchandise belonging to a foreign merchant on a French ship. When Colbert issued an edict in 1669, that had as a consequence the possibility of Armenians trading in Marseille, the twenty percent tax due from foreigners remained as the last protectionist measure to aid the Marseillais. Colbert's intentions were clear concerning the Armenians and the Jews. He did just what he

⁶²Rambert, G. *Histoire du Commerce de Marseille*. Publié par la chambre de commerce de Marseille en sept tomes Paris Plon 1953-1957. This long work is a thorough study of the Archives of the Chamber of Commerce of Marseilles, all the edicts quoted here are found in those archives. There are some as well at the Archives of the Ministère de la Marine in Paris. The archives of the Ministère de la Marine are clearly annotated in the bibliographical section so that those edicts are recognizable. For the archives of Marseilles, they have not been consulted directly but are found in the compendium above.

⁶³Archives of the Chambre de Commerce de Marseille: A. C. C.M. B22 dated 1667 in Rambert, G. Vol. 5 p. 11

had done with the East India Company—opened it to foreigners with experience, in the hope that it would benefit France. He wrote to the Baron of Oppède in charge of the application of the 1669 treaty concerning the franchise of Marseilles: “I pray you should give the Armenians all the protection that the authority of your office will permit you, to preserve them from all the annoyances of the local inhabitants who do not see what constitutes the advantage of their commerce.”⁶⁴ In 1686, he continued his policy of protecting Armenian commerce. In 1687 he began to become annoyed at the advantage that the English were gaining by commercing through the Armenian houses established in Marseille. An edict of the 21st of October 1687 forbids the Armenians to engage themselves in the silk trade in the city of Marseille. The treaty names the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire, not the Persian Armenians.⁶⁵ It is difficult to determine what this meant. Perhaps it was because those established in Marseille originated only from the Ottoman Empire. This was a distinct possibility. The Armenians from New Julfa may have stopped in Aleppo or Smyrna.

The protectionist tax of 20% was always bypassed by fraudulent means. It seems the Armenian merchants found a way of avoiding the problem. They had French merchants enter the silk in their own names. Fraud seems to have been widespread and detrimental to the newly augmented French silk industry.⁶⁶ There were more than fifteen hundred bales of *ardasse* silk entering Marseille, despite the protectionist efforts.⁶⁷

It is clear that the Armenians save for one exception had no commerce with the French company. However it must be remembered that Tavernier wrote in 1664 that

⁶⁴In Rambert, G. Vol. 5 p.14

⁶⁵See Kévorkian, R. H. who has pointed this out.p.225

⁶⁶In Rambert G. p. 19

⁶⁷Kévorkian, R. H. p.229

the French merchants were the customers the merchants of New Julfa preferred in Turkey. It is with non-company merchants that Armenians of New Julfa commerced. They paid the Armenians in cash.⁶⁸ The prohibition of Richelieu's edict still stood. The Armenians could not directly export gold or silver from France. The silk trade with the French took place in Aleppo and Smyrna. The nascent company's trade was by any account negligible compared to that of the independant French merchants of Marseille who sailed to Aleppo or Smyrna.

⁶⁸See chapter on Merchant organisation, under modes of remuneration and payement for a discussion of this: "The merchants who are for the most part Armenians prefer selling their merchandise to the French rather than to the other nations of Europe because they pay in money as opposed to the English or the Dutch who obligate them to taking half of their payment in cloth." Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Les Six voyages en Turquie et en Perse*, Paris Masson 1981 Tome I, p.141. For original text see footnote 37 in chapter 4.

CONCLUSION

It has been attempted to demonstrate that giving the dates of 1604-1722 for the Armenian presence in New Julfa is at best a crude approximation. There were several waves of forced immigration. More importantly, it was not the Afghan invasions of 1722 that caused the sudden departures of the Armenians to India, Russia or Europe. Since the early sixties of the seventeenth century the Armenians of New Julfa had begun to settle elsewhere. It was both due to the extension of their international trade, when it came to factors settling abroad, and to definitive departure from Safavid Iran, in the case of the Khojas moving abroad. The religious problems they encountered in Persia in the seventies, as well as the poor economic situation under the final Safavid Shahs was at the basis of these departures.

None of the above information is terribly new, and a good examination of the available sources could easily establish this, although it is often neglected. What is of great interest, is the intricacies of Armenian merchant organization in the suburb of New Julfa. The realization that in addition to possessing a merchant class with a highly organized commercial system, in fact a Company of Commerce, New Julfa was governed by its wealthiest merchants is of the greatest importance. It was a merchant oligarchy much in the spirit of the city-states of Europe. The civil Government of New Julfa, however was presided over by offices specific to the Persian hierarchy of government. The officers were Armenian merchants but were chosen by the Persian Shah. Beyond this form of integration in the Persian system of government which permitted communication with the court, the government of New Julfa was in the hands of a few merchants. They were, of course, subordinate to the Persian Shah in criminal matters. The governing council of New Julfa comprised of the members of the Company of Commerce of New Julfa. Even if the Persian Shah could revoke the official post of Governor from the Provost of the merchants, or

kalantar, he could do little to dismantle the civil government of New Julfa which was a merchant oligarchy independent in its civil decisions and organization.

The structural unit governing both the commercial associations and civil government of the Armenian suburb was demonstrated to be the family. This is in keeping with the traditional social structure present throughout Armenian feudality. Though the exact structure of Armenian feudality remains to be studied, the family or house is certainly at its basis. As a landless diaspora, the tradition of family loyalty survived, modified by other joint economic interests, those of international commerce.

The existence of both a proper company of commerce in New Julfa, and a civil government by merchants gave rise to some diplomatic representation at the end of the century. It helps determine which international endeavors were collective, that is endorsed by the governing council of New Julfa, and those which were inspired by individuals. This is invaluable in analyzing Armenian participation in the European Companies.

Just as there has been an effort to focus strictly to the Armenians of New Julfa, eliminating all but the Persian Armenians from this study, an effort was made to distinguish the involvements of the Council of New Julfa from individual ties formed by merchants of New Julfa. In the merchant council, a strict code of honor eliminated the black sheep from among its ranks. They had, however, no recourse against self-styled representatives and individual initiatives across the wide world, in the name of all Armenians.

The European companies were in direct competition with the Armenians. For the seventeenth century, the two cases of collaboration were fostered strictly by individuals. While Khoja Panos offered his services to the English in the name of the entire Armenian nation, Marcara Avanchins did no such thing. He kept his initiative clear. As the sole individual participations, they ultimately were of no consequence

for the French or English companies. Likewise, they had no effect on Armenian trade in the Indian trade or elsewhere. The trade networks of the New Julfa Armenians never became involved with these individual actions. Company trade superseded Armenian traders in the eighteenth century. The generalization that they were intermediaries stems from the assertions of Mesrobian Seth who extrapolated Armenian involvement at the end of the seventeenth century from Armenian involvement in the offices of the English company in the middle of the eighteenth century. The Armenians, in fact, were not intermediaries for the Companies. For the Companies, the Armenians were their fiercest and better-established competitors.

Both the account book of Hovhannes and the adventures of Marcara Avanchins indicate the importance of Armenian trade in the Indian Ocean. The other important centers for the silk trade were the Turkish port cities of Aleppo and Smyrna, where silk was exchanged against cash. The French seemed to have been preferred customers in Turkey, and providers of most of the cash. Their company had no privileges of direct trade in Persia until late.

The northern route through Russia was used, but not to the detriment of the traditional Turkish route, which seems to have remained in use throughout the period. There is not enough information in the available sources to determine the predominance of either route at any given date.

One of the most important roles of these principal merchants of Persia was to bring in currency gained from the silk they had sold. This aspect of their economic role deserves further study. The silver devaluation in Iran at the end of the century may have been caused in part by the reluctance of the Armenian merchants to relinquish their cash at the mints, as the law required. Given that they were the primary source of this currency, and most probably mint masters as well, their actions likely contributed to the decline of the Persian economy. They seemed to have transported their money directly to India. Considering the religious pressure they

were under, it is hardly surprising that they were striving to establish themselves elsewhere.

New Julfa was certainly the center of the main trading network for the Armenians of the seventeenth century. There were other Armenian trading networks in Poland and elsewhere, but the New Julfa connection seems to have maintained its own distinct networks, and forbade cooperation with Catholic Armenians.

Whether New Julfa constituted a national home is another question. It is difficult to imagine that the brutality of the forced deportations was forgotten within four generations, especially with the Persian court periodically providing such unpleasant reminders in the form of decrees demanding conversion to Islam. Nevertheless, Arak'el's word cannot be equated with that of the inhabitants of the suburb, as he was an ecclesiastic tied to a Katholikos plotting the liberation of Armenia from the "tyranny" of Moslem rule. It seems the merchants took a very conservative stance when it came to conversion to Catholicism, or plans for liberation by the European powers, or for that matter, any form of cooperation. As for the interests they were serving, they were clearly their own. They were no more intermediaries for the Europeans than they were agents for the Persian Shahs. They needed the financial strength to survive in a climate hostile to their religion and national identity, to avoid having to integrate into it. They were politically conservative and cautious. Individual Armenians from New Julfa at times acted on their own initiative.

Although Marcara was one such individual, his story confirms the conclusions of the present analysis that Armenian merchant organization built itself upon a basis of family ties and vast networks around the world. Be it that his endeavors with the French fell outside the pale of the interests of the New Julfa Company, he was supported by his family, the clergy of New Julfa, and the Armenians in India.

This system of family ties was not extraordinary. The well-known Italian merchant families are a European example of the same family system. The Parsis in

India also had the same system. Both these groups were extremely successful, like the Armenians of new Julfa. The strength of the bonds of loyalty in their ties, and a system which functioned on trust, explains their effectiveness as international merchants.

Among the other keys to their success in world trade, at that point in history, was their will to better their situation in captivity, which gave them their knowledge of languages and of the customs of others. Their ability to adapt and their willingness to take on the certain difficulty of long journeys between East (Persia, India) and West (Holland, Italy, Russia) explains much. Proof that their knowledge of international commerce was an organized body of reference for the use of an organized network exists in the form of a merchant manual dated 1699. The opinion of the European travellers about their industriousness is well-founded.

That anyone would be willing to reach Amsterdam through Archangelsk is proof enough of their tenacity and dedication. Not having access to public office, without converting to Islam in Iran, not having access to any such functions in Europe, without converting to Catholicism, the robe of the merchant was the safest garb in which to remain Armenian.

SOURCE ANALYSIS

One of the main difficulties encountered during this research was the lack of secondary works on Safavid economy. This is a general problem encountered by anyone interested in pre-Qajar Persian economy. It becomes even more difficult to establish an understanding of the role of the Armenians within that larger framework, if information on the framework itself is so scarce. The one and only monograph on the economic history of Iran, by Charles Issawi, begins with the Qajars with no more than a few introductory words on the Safavid period. Consequently, it was often necessary to resort to studies which are not directly concerned with the Safavids, but with seventeenth century trade in general. An example is a theoretical study of seventeenth century trade *Carracks, Caravans and Companies: The Structural Crisis in the European-Asian Trade of the Early Seventeenth Century*, by Niels Steensgaard.¹ It contains much valuable information on Persian economic policy under the reign of Shah Abbas, because it concentrates on the pepper and silk trades. It exemplifies, despite its great value, two of the major obstacles encountered in all secondary sources on the Safavid era: a stubborn concentration on the reign of Shah Abbas I, and conclusions generalized for the whole of the seventeenth century based on information relevant to the reign of Shah Abbas. Worse still are the difficulties for any general references for the last half of the century, because of the total absence of any fundamental research into the end of the seventeenth century. Furthermore, even for trade at the beginning of the century, there is another anachronism committed in

¹Steensgaard, Niels. *Carracks, Caravans and Companies: The Structural Crisis in the European-Asian Trade of the Early Seventeenth Century*. Copenhagen: 1973.

the only serious study available, which skews its conclusions and makes it difficult to use

Steensgaard's monograph is a structural analysis based on theoretical guidelines, but it uses the chronological narrative methods, usual to political histories. It focuses on the silk trade of Safavid Iran, and on the pepper trade of the Portuguese, in order to determine the importance of the Companies. It aims to determine how much of non-Company trade ("peddler trade," as he calls it) survived the expansion of Company trade. The fall of Hormuz to the Persians allied with the British in 1622 is its main focus. It explores vast amounts of European archival material, as well as travel accounts for the beginning of the century. In his conclusion about the percentage of peddler trade he commits one of the rare but terribly significant anachronisms common to many attempts at generalizations about the Safavid era. Though his study is entirely confined to the first quarter of the seventeenth century, he uses the Armenian Hovhannes as the archetypal peddler to give strength to his conclusion. Unfortunately, Hovhannes' account book, the only non-European source mentioned in the study, dates from 1685-1692.² Given the dearth of existing information on the economy of the whole era this form of skewed extrapolation is understandably tempting.

This erroneous method leads one to consider some of the most difficult and common problems anyone interested in the economy of Safavid Iran is likely to encounter. The primary sources present their own problems. The non-existence of secondary sources for Safavid economy, save part of a chapter in volume six of the Cambridge history of Iran is in great part a reflection of the paucity of information available in primary sources. For instance, many of the Safavid sources are eulogies

²See Khachikian, Levon. "Le registre d'un marchand arménien en Perse, en Inde et au Tibet (1682-1693)." *Annales* XXII, 2 (March-April 1967): 231-278.

of reigns. Although this study has concentrated on Armenian sources of the Safavid period, it is appropriate to try to explain why the Persian sources have been of little relevance, except for establishing the general framework for the early part of the seventeenth century, which is herein referred to only for comparison..

A)Safavid Sources in Persian

Two sources of great significance relating the organization and history of the Safavid Iran have now been translated and studied. The first one is an anonymous work on administration translated and prefaced in the early forties by Vladimir Minorsky: Minorsky, V. *Tadhkirat al-Muluk, a Manual of Safavid Administration*. London: Gibb Memorial Series, volume XVI, 1943. The *Tadhkirat* is believed to have been written in the late 11th /17th century, since it is a critical account of the decaying administrative institutions of the last Safavid Shahs. In spite of its late date, the work has more often than not been used for far earlier periods. Minorsky's introduction and notes encourage one to do so. Minorsky's introduction is one of the best examples to cite in order to pinpoint the fact that early Safavid history, Shah Abbas' reign in particular, is the period on which most scholarship has concentrated. This late source itself has often been used to describe an earlier period. It is a useful and unbiased source, although its pertinence to trade is limited. Minorsky's discussion of the silk trade is very brief.

A second source of great significance, the *Ta'rikh-i 'Ālamārā-yi 'Abbāsī*, was translated more recently: Iskandar Beg Munshi. *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*. Trans. Roger M. Savory. Persian Heritage Series, 28. Boulder, Colorado: 1978. Roger Savory is also responsible for a general history of the Safavids,³ in which he

³Savory, Roger. *Iran under the Safavids*. Cambridge, 1980.

makes extensive use of this source. Although the emphasis is on the reign of Shah Abbas, there are sections which discuss his genealogy, the battles and the reigns of his predecessors. It also contains a number of discourses, a eulogy to Shah Abbas, concerning his piety, judgement, good fortune, authority, policies and simplicity of life. The remainder is a year by year description of events. Great stress is placed on his sense of justice, his concern for the rights of his servants, and his public works. It has quite a different tone than the one used by contemporary travellers to describe the luxury of an oriental court or the temperamental behavior of an "oriental despot." The tone is a wholly admiring which is understandable, considering the fact that it is a court history composed by the chief secretary of Shah Abbas' court.

It is notable at the end of this brief enumeration there are no sources other than either panegyrics or administrative documents such as *farmāns* and *waqfs*. It may be true that the travellers have been over-quoted, and perhaps at times uncritically so, for the first quarter of the seventeenth century, but they are nevertheless important sources. By contrast, the information contained in the travel accounts from the latter part of the century has rarely been tapped.

This present study does not directly refer to this history of Shah Abbas, or to another history which is also an eulogy, the *History of Shah Ismail Safawi*, translated by Ghulam Sarwar, save for certain generalities which have been discussed by R. Savory.⁴ It is not only because this study concerns itself with a later period, but because these histories, as well as regional histories such as *Ta'rikh-i Gīlānī* or *Ta'rikh-i Māzandarān*, are concerned with the deeds of great men and not more mundane issues. There are no descriptions of the organization of the silk trade, or of prices or customs. For the necessary chronological framework of the Safavid period, the wars and general political course of events, this study has accepted both the

⁴Published in 1939 by the author at the Muslim University, Aligarh.

chronology and social analysis of the authors of the articles in volume six of the Cambridge History of Iran.

Indirect reference will be made to earlier *farmāns* concerning the silk trade. The *farmāns* concerning the silk trade under Shah Abbas have been translated by Linda Steinmann for her dissertation, with the assistance of Ann Lambton.⁵ They are kept at the British Library and the Bodleian Library at Oxford. They comprise the *farmāns* the Shah gave to the English at the beginning of the century.

B) Safavid Sources Specifically Relevant to the Armenians

None of the above sources are directly relevant to the Armenians of New Julfa, except the *farmāns* on the silk trade and only by extrapolation. They were given to the English at a time when the Armenians were competing with them for the exportation of silk. There is, however, a corpus of *farmāns* concerning the Armenians that is now preserved in the Matenadaran in Armenia. They are very early *farmāns*, most of them pertaining the establishment of the Armenians in New Julfa in Isphahan, or the Armenian Church. The end-date of the published collection is 1651: Papazian, H. D. *Persidskiye Dokumenty Matenadarana: Ukazi*. [Matenadaran, Erevan. *Firmans: A Collection of Faramin of Safavid Shahs issued for Armenians*.] Erevan: 1956, 1959. These ultimately have been of no value here. Not only do they concern an earlier period, they have no direct connection to the subject of trade.

⁵Steinmann, Linda. *Shah Abbas and the Royal silk Trade*. New York University, unpublished dissertation, 1986.

C)The Armenian Sources for the Safavid Period used in this Study

The Armenian sources have been referred to in the introductory chapter. The main source consulted is the account book of the merchant Hovhannes.⁶ It is a unique source both for the study of Armenian merchants, as well as for the economic histories of Iran, India, and Tibet. It contains a wealth of material, despite its rather dry enumeration of goods and prices typical of a merchant's accounts. It provides material on prices, weights and measures, customs, routes as well as a glimpse into Armenian merchant organization. The introduction to this source has been translated⁷ and is now often employed by trade historians, but the source itself remains untranslated and unavailable to most scholars. The account book is not descriptive. Rather, it merely contains daily entries listing what was sold, where, and at what price. The period covered is from 1682-1693, during which Hovhannes of Julfa travels from Isphahan to India, and from there on to Tibet. For the purposes of this study, it has been the source for a wealth of information, but the account book is of great interest to any one interested in the economy of any of those regions. The language used in this account book could generate a whole study in itself, as it is kept in the language peculiar to the merchants of New Julfa, a heavily persianized dialect which has influences of Turkish and other languages.

Some of the information on Armenian merchants in the account book is corroborated here by use of an earlier source, the diary of Zacharia of Akoulis. He is not from New Julfa, but from the village of Akoulis, located on the southern shore of

⁶Xačikyan, L. S. P'apazyan, H. *Hovhannes Ter-Davt'yan Julayec'u Hašvetumarə*. [The Account Book of Hovannes Ter- Davt'yan of Julfa.] Erevan: 1984.

⁷Khachikian, Levon. "Le registre d'un marchand arménien en Perse, en Inde et au Tibet (1682-1693)." *Annales* XXII, 2 (March-April 1967): 231-278.
Khachikian, Levon. "The Ledger of the Merchant Hovannes Joughayetsi," *Journal of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta* VIII, 3 (1966): 153-186.

the Araxe in Armenia. He trades in Armenian territory, and also travels to Amsterdam. He starts writing in 1654. Although this study has not made use of sources predating 1664, an exception has been made in the case of Zacharia. Not only does his narration reach 1660, which is very close, but it was invaluable to have the testimony of an Armenian merchant who was from a different location yet involved in international transactions.

Another source of great interest for the trade of the end of the century is a manual for merchants which was published in Amsterdam in 1699. It served as a guide for merchants in their travels across the world, explaining weights, measures, moneys for each place. It is invaluable here since it can be used to trace the routes in use at the end of the century. It is one of the first Armenian books published in Amsterdam. The date of the manuscript is not clear, but it is stated clearly in one of the chapters that the tariffs are for its year of publication, 1699. One can deduce that this chapter of the manuscript was of the same year or very recent.⁸ The existence of such a manual, composed by a merchant from New Julfa for other merchants from the same group, speaks of an elaborate merchant organization. The certitude that it was meant for merchants from New Julfa only is amply evident from the language it is written in: the same obscure persianized Armenian dialect incomprehensible to all other groups of Armenians unfamiliar with the Persian language.

There are also two histories in Armenian which have been consulted here, that of Arak'el of Tabriz describing Shah Abbas' campaigns against the Turks and the deportation of the Armenians from their homeland to Persia. The descriptions of the

⁸Lucas Vanadec'i *Ganj čapoy, kšroy, t'woy, ew dramic' bolor asxarhi. Or ē gitut'win amenayn tesak čapoc', ksroc', ew dramic' orov bolor ašxarhi vačarakanut'iwn vari. žolovyal ew i mi vwayr havak'cal ašxatut'camb Lukasū abašnorh jankali Vnandec'woy. Caxiwk ew i xndroy hayc'man hatc'man Julayec'i Xačaturi ordi Paron Petrosin. Tpiwk ew hawanut'camberamec' vehi Tomay vardapeti ew ew srbap'ayl episcoposi Vanandec'woy Tann Golt'neanc'. yAmi teatn. 1699, yunvari 16. y Amsterdam.*

Afghan invasions by Petros Sarkis Gilanentz, witness to the end of Safavid power is simply referred to and not extensively quoted..⁹

The History of the Afghan invasion of Iran by Sarkis Gilanentz was consulted for a limited purpose here. That of establishing the changes which took place in the lives of the Armenians of New Julfa after the invasions. There is both a Russian translation of it, as well as one in English by a certain Dr. Minassian, himself an Isphahani and a great collector of books, whose collection was recently bequeathed to UCLA.¹⁰ This source was not available in Armenian. As a consequence, Dr. Minassian's translation was used. References to it are scarce, so it is not of crucial importance here.

This is not the case for the narration of Arak'el, which has been consulted extensively. The work of the historian Arak'el has been invaluable here in establishing if not a totally objective picture of life in New Julfa during the deportations, at the very least a picture of life in New Julfa as presented by its inhabitants in the middle of the century. He interviewed New Julfa Armenians a generation or two after the deportations of 1604. Their testimony is in turn filtered by Arak'el's point of view. He is a doctor (a *Vartaped*) of the Armenian church at Ejmiacin. He states clearly that he suffers under the heavy labor imposed on him by

⁹Arak'el Davrizhec'i Vardapet. *Girk' patmut'canc' šaradreal Vardapetin Arak'eloy Davrēzhac'woy: gawarin Araratoy ev masin Goll'an en minčew yawart patmagrut'eans aylev i hišum asteal masnavorabar asti ev anti.* [A Book of Histories composed by Arak'el of Tabriz.] Hams Elawdamum 1669. Amsterdam: 1669. Valaršapat: 1896. Gilanentz, with arcent critical edition, Erevan 1990.

Petros di Sarkis. *The Chronicle of Petros di Sarkis Gilanentz concerning the Afghan invasion of Persia in 1722, the siege of Isphahan and the repercussions in Northern Persia Russia and Turkey.* Translated from the Armenian by Caro Owen Minasian, introduction and notes by Laurence Lockhart. LiGilanentz, Petros di Sarkis. *The Chronicle of Petros di Sarkis Gilanentz concerning the Afghan invasion of Persia in 1722, the siege of Isphahan and the repercussions in Northern Persia Russia and Turkey.* Translated from the Armenian by Caro Owen Minasian, introduction and notes by Laurence Lockhart. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1959.Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1959.

¹⁰Gilanentz, Petros di Sarkis. *The Chronicle of Petros di Sarkis Gilanentz concerning the Afghan invasion of Persia in 1722, the siege of Isphahan and the repercussions in Northern Persia Russia and Turkey.* Translated from the Armenian by Caro Owen Minasian, introduction and notes by Laurence Lockhart. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1959.

the Kathlikos of Ejmiacin who has ordered him to write this history. In fact, two Katholikoi in succession have ordered the history of the Armenians to be recorded. Arak'el himself provides all the necessary information on the dates and progress of his work at the end of his narration. He began writing in 1650 at the bequest of Kathlikos Philippos. At his death in 1654, he interrupts his work hoping to abandon the laborious project he had been ordered to undertake. In 1657, after three years hiatus, the new Kathlikos Hagob of Julfa asks him to continue the history. Arak'el completed it in 1661. The history spans approximately sixty years, starting with the deportations of 1604. Given Arak'el's position, he is not an unbiased source. Both of the Katholikoi he served faithfully were dedicated not only to the restoration of the glory of Ejmiacin that Shah Abbas had wished to erase, but to the restoration of Armenian culture, and in the case of the Kathlikos Hagob the restoration of Armenia's liberty¹¹. Nevertheless, some of the forced conversions and brutalities he describes under Shah Abbas are confirmed by other sources. The events of 1613 described in the second chapter seem as brutal under the pen of the Sherley brothers. It is, therefore, without much hesitation that his version of these events has been accepted here. If his attitude towards Shah Abbas seems ambiguous it probably reflects the prevailing attitude of the interviewed population of New Julfa. It is probable, however, given the inclinations of Katholikos Hagop who had commissioned the work, that Arak'el's task also consisted to stress the captivity of the Armenians under Persian rule not their prosperity. Their material prosperity and their physical well being were not his chief concern, he was more concerned by their loyalty to the Armenian faith.

¹¹See *Histoire des Armenians* G. Khosdegian, "Renaissance Armenienne et Mouvement de Liberation," pp. 22-23.

There is a French translation by Brosset available based on the first printed edition of the *Histories*, printed in Amsterdam in 1668, which places it along with the Bible among the first Armenian books printed. This costly enterprise, barely a few years after the completion of the manuscript, speaks of the importance this history must have had for the Armenian Church and the Armenian community. There had been a printing press closer to Ejmiacin; NewJulfa had one since 1638. Yet Arak'el's work was taken all the way to Amsterdam. One may hypothesise that the contents were not suitable for publication in Iran. The very opening of this history which bemoans the captivity of a Christian people under Moslem rule confirms this hypothesis.

Fortunately a critical edition of Arak'el's *Histories* was issued by the Armenian Academy of Sciences in 1990.¹²

C) The European Sources

i) The Travellers:

There is an enormous number of travel accounts relevant to the study of Safavid Iran. An extensive list of them, which specifically refer to the Armenians, can be found in the bibliography of this study. Of all the travellers, the most popular and the most quoted source is the account of the famous—or infamous—Sherley brothers. Again most historians have been concerned with the reign of Shah Abbas the Great, considered the apogee of Safavid organization and power. Because there is little with which to counter or supplement the travel accounts, these Europeans tend to predominate. Surprisingly, more often than not the Sherley brothers are much more the focus in some studies than the Shah himself. These rather unreliable brothers and other travellers, who aggrandized themselves less, have been the favorite sources for

¹²Arak'el Daurijec'i *Girk' Patmut'eanc'* Erevan 1990.

many of the histories written about the period, including the histories written in Persian by Iranian historians.¹³

Certain accounts are irreplaceable because of the information they offer. This holds true for the accounts of Jean Baptiste Tavernier and Jean Chardin. John Fryer's account provides some information, but his interest in trade is much more limited. It has now become somewhat of a trend to dismiss all travellers as unreliable. Certainly, they have to be used with more caution than they sometimes have in the past, but neglecting them entirely would eliminate a trove of information about routes, prices, travel times, and trading centers not found elsewhere for this period. Jean Baptiste Tavernier's travels have only partially been translated into English. His travels in India are found in English, but the passages needed here had to be translated from the French. The most recent French edition was used here.¹⁴ For Chardin's account, the English edition was used whenever possible. This is not a translation, but a bona fide edition in English which has recently been republished. It is much shorter than any of the French editions as it only comprises his travels in Persia. Even these have been partially abridged. Otherwise, the latest French edition of Chardin was used.¹⁵

There is another source which has often been quoted relative to the beginning of the century, a collection of letters offering observations by missionaries to the Persian Court: Anon. *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal Missions of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries*. London: 1939. When used with the necessary circumspection, the letters are of great value especially in the study of the Armenians.

¹³Falsafi and Navai have both concentrated on the early Safavid period. Falsafi, Nasrallah. *Zindigānī Shāh Abbas Avval*. [The life of Shah Abbas the First.] 2 vol. Tehran: 1965.

¹⁴For a complete list of the available editions of Tavernier see the extensive bibliography on travellers at the end of this study.

¹⁵For a complete list of the editions of Chardin available see the extensive bibliography at the end of this study.

The missionaries were of course quite concerned with the Christians of Iran. They hold little or no information on trade.

Strangely enough, the wealth of information in both Jean Chardin and Jean Baptiste Tavernier has remained largely unexploited. For the time frame and the purpose of this research the travels of both Jean Chardin and Jean Baptiste Tavernier provide extremely important information about the silk trade, about prices and routes as well as the role of the Armenians. Moreover, the descriptions of the Armenian merchants on the road are of great interest. One of the only such passages by a traveller has often been quoted out of context and misunderstood as a general statement about all Armenians. Once the information is put back into its proper context, the details provide a clear image of the social life of the travelling Armenians. They are also a unique source for merchant habits, customs, and moneys in Safavid Iran.

ii) European Archives:

The European archives can be considered indirect but valuable sources for Safavid foreign relations and trade. Their use has been viewed with suspicion by historians sensitive to "European Imperialism." It is perfectly true that the archives consulted, whether in France, England or the Vatican, are the archives of European Foreign relations, and the commercial archives of the Companies are those of the European Expansion. There are no Persian counterparts to these archives. Though they are necessarily one-sided given their origin, they offer irreplaceable indirect information. The main archives of interest are in London and Oxford, Paris and The

Hague, but there are many more of indirect relevance to Safavid Iran scattered across Europe.¹⁶

They have rarely been exploited by historians of Safavid Iran.¹⁷ Recently the Dutch archives have begun to be systematically searched by a scholar of Safavid Iran, W. Floor. A dissertation also is in progress at Oxford on the relations of the Armenians with the English. The travellers as well as the *Chronicle of the Carmelites* have remained much in favour while most of the archival material has been neglected, save by historians interested in European trade. There are very good reasons for this. A vast amount of archival material must be explored to obtain a small yield of indirect information about Iran.

This study has confined itself to research in the French archives. The Archives nationales, as well as the archives at the Affaires étrangères have been consulted in conjunction with many archives kept at the Bibliothèque nationale. The aim was to establish a clearer image of the relation between the French companies and the

¹⁶The list of relevant archives is very vast, the ones consulted for this study are listed in the introductory chapter. For the Dutch archives there is a published series that is of great usefulness: Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatiën. *Beschrijving van de Oostindische Compagnie*. Deel 1, vol. 63. Dr. F. W. Stapel ed. S'Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1927. Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatiën. *Generale Missiven der V.O.C.* Dr. W. Ph. Coolhaas ed. S'Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960. Deel 1 is volume 104, follow in chronological order, volumes 112, 125, 136, 150, 159, 164. Start 1610, end 1725. In addition there are the archives of the V.O.C. at Den Haag and other archives in Leyden.

The French archives of relevance have been listed in the bibliography, the archives of the Foreign ministry, A.F., and those of the French East India Company are of relevance.

Great Britain may have the best organized and richest archives of all Europe concerning this period. In addition to the archives of the East India Company, there are the consular letters, as well as many relevant Persian manuscripts kept either at the British Library or the Bodleian Library at Oxford.

The archives of the Vatican have a wealth of information about the missionaries to Persia. In addition the merchant Republic of Venice also has archives relevant to Venetian diplomatic and commercial relations with Persia and Turkey. There are also relevant archives in Portugal and Spain that Steensgaard has consulted for his study.

¹⁷The exceptions are: Ferrier, R. W. *British-Persian Relations in the Seventeenth Century*. Cambridge: unpublished doctoral thesis, 1970. Ferrier is also responsible for many articles where he has used European Archival material.

Bayani, Khanbaba, *Les relations de l'Iran avec l'Europe Occidentale à l'époque Safavide*. Paris: 1937 is a very unreliable work with a claim to archival sources but there are none to be found, and Ramazani, Rouhollah, *The Foreign Policy of Iran 1500-1941*. Charlottesville: 1966. There are some articles that have used Dutch archival material such as the ones by W. Floor.

Armenian merchants. While the archives in Marseille might have yielded additional information, they have been well studied,¹⁸ and a major five-volume compendium on the history of the commerce of the city was published long ago. It was invaluable here.

Secondary works on Safavid Iran

The bulk of recent scholarship concentrates on Safavid administration and institutions: R. Savory, A.K Lambton, H. R. Roemer and Jean Aubin in France have written several articles on the subject.¹⁹ R. D McChesney has published an articles on the *Waqfs*. A. K. Lambton and Jean Aubin have also written about the Timurid institutions, but Roger Savory has primarily focused the Safavids. He is the author of the most recently published history of the Safavids.²⁰ Its emphasis is on administration and on the reign of Shah Abbas. Savory cites from the *History of Shah Abbas*, as well as several older general histories of Iran.²¹ His other sources are *Purchas and his Pilgrims*, the accounts of the Sherley brothers, and the *Chronicles*.

¹⁸Rambert, G. *Histoire du Commerce de Marseille* Publié par la chambre de commerce de Marseille en sept Tomes Paris Plon 1953-1957

¹⁹A few examples of this long list are:

Aubin, Jean "Etudes Safavides I: Shah Ismail et les notables de l'Iraq Persan." JESHO, 2 1959: 37-81

A.K.S Lambton "The office of the Kalantar under the Safavid and the Afghans." *Mélanges Henri Massé*, Tehran 1963: 206-18.

Savory, R. M. "The office of Khalifat al- Khulafa under the Safavids." *Journal of African and Oriental Studies*, LXXXV (1965): 497-502.

Savory, R. M. "The Principal Offices of the Safavid State." (Shah Isma'il) *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, XXII (1960): 91-105. (Shah Tahmasp) *Bulletin of the the School of Oriental and African Studies*, XXIV (1961): 65-85.

Savory, R. M.. "A secretarial Career under Shah Tahmasp I (1524-1576). *Islamic Studies* II 1963: 343-52.

²⁰Savory, Roger. *Iran under the Safavids*. Cambridge, 1980.

²¹Malcom, Sir John. *History of Persia* London: 1829.

Curzon, George *Persia and the Persian Question* 2 vol. 1892

Lockhart laurence *The Fall of the Safavid Dynasty and the Afghan Occupation of Persia* London 1958

Sykes, Sir Percy *A History of Persia* 3d ed. London 1930

Savory discusses trade rather briefly, and never broaches the question of whether or not silk was a royal monopoly and how exactly it was organized. He does, however, stress the fact that the commerce of silk was in the hands of the Armenians. The earlier histories of Iran, from which he often cites, lay even less stress on trade, but most do have a reference to the role of the Armenian merchants in the silk trade.

The only book on the economy of Iran before contemporary times was written by Charles Issawi.²² It refers only briefly to the Safavid period in its introductory pages, since the study concentrates on the nineteenth century. An attempt was made to study the silk trade at the beginning of the century by Linda Steinmann.²³ It confines itself to the study of two royal *farmāns* kept at the Bodleian library. It bypasses the Armenians, who are hardly mentioned. To justify the lack of information their role is denied.

The work of R.W Ferrier is the only previous attempt to clarify a few aspects of Safavid international trade²⁴ He is of the opinion that the silk trade and was the quasi-monopoly of the Armenians. His sources are the British archives, those of the India office in particular. Although through these british documents the importance of the Armenians comes through there is no information as to their role or organization. He has recently summarized the findings of his doctoral thesis and

²²Issawi, Charles. *The Economic History of Iran 1800-1914*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.

²³Steinmann, Linda. *Shah Abbas and the Royal Silk Trade*. Unpublished Disseration, N.Y.U. 1986

²⁴Ferrier, R. W. *British-Persian Relations in the Seventeenth Century*. Cambridge: unpublished doctoral thesis, 1970.

Ferrier, R. W "The Agreement of the East India Company with the Armenian Nation 22nd of June 1688." *Revue des études arméniennes.*, 7(n.s.) (1970): 427-43.

Ferrier, R. W. " The Armenians and the East India Company in Persia in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries" *The Economic History Review*, second series, XXVI, 1(February 1973): 38-62. also see " the Economic dimensions of the Policy of Shah Abbas." *Iran Moderne*, 1 1976: 66-72

articles in a chapter on trade in the sixth volume of the *Cambridge History of Iran*.²⁵ This chapter is a general one concerning Persian trade from the 14th to the 18th centuries. The one attempt in English to understand the role of the Armenians as merchants is Philip Curtin's chapter on Armenian carriers in his monogram on cross cultural trade.²⁶

As for the Persian merchants, the subject itself is controversial. Most general histories of Iran do not mention them at all, or evade the difficulty by affirming that the Armenians were the only merchants through their own merit. Sir John Malcom, author of the first history of Persia, affirms that they "were far more industrious than the Persians" and that they advanced the general prosperity of the Empire.²⁷ There seems to be more prejudice than proof in this sweeping statement. Since Sir John Malcom is the author of the earliest history of Persia, he has been quoted many times without reservation. Unfortunately, there are only a few studies about the merchants under the Qajars, and none for the Safavid period.²⁸ One article mentions the fact that the Qajar merchant class were not a result of a spontaneous generation rising out of the refuse of the Safavid era.²⁹ This article remains a theoretical attempt, based on speculation. The lack of scholarship on the subject is due to a lack of direct information in the sources. While there are studies on the *bāzār*, whose emphasis is

²⁵ Chapter 8 of volume 6 of the *Cambridge History of Iran*. "Trade from the mid-14th century to the end of the Safavid period."

²⁶ Curtin, Philip D. *Cross Cultural Trade in World History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

²⁷ Malcom, p. 554

²⁸ Floor, W. M. "The Merchants (*tujjar*) in Qajjar Iran." *ZDGM* 126 (1976): 101-136.

²⁹ Clamard, Jean "Les Marchands Iraniens, formation et montée d'un groupe de pression 16-19ième siècle." in *Marchands et hommes d'affaires asiatiques*. Paris 1987

on the crafts and the artisans, there is little or no reference to the merchant class.³⁰ There have been theoretical attempts to explain this mysterious silence on the merchant class by speculating on its total absence.³¹ Bert Fragner in his economic analysis speaks of merchant princes, the word used to describe them means partner in Turkish *hurtaq*. He demonstrates that most wealthy land owners preferred to live in the city, they invested their excess revenues in commerce. He traces the existence of this class back to the 14th century and finds them still investing in commerce in Safavid times. Earlier in this dissertation Chardin is quoted describing the Shah as the wealthiest merchant prince. Most interesting is his statement that the Persian merchants still conducted their commerce solely in cash clumsily carrying around bags of silver worth 50 tumans. He cites the poor impression this made on several European travellers. Given the methods used by the Armenian merchants, the letter of exchange, the Persian merchant was at a clear disadvantage for international trade. Non cash transactions were known in Iran since Mongol times but in the seventeenth century they seem to have been forgotten.³²

This short list concludes studies concerned however briefly with Safavid trade. There is further information to be found in secondary works dealing with one or several of the Companies, as well as economic studies of the Persian Gulf or the Indian Ocean. Passages relevant to the silk trade and to the Armenians are to be

³⁰ Keyvani, M. *Artisans and Guild life in the later Safavid period*. Berlin 1982 and

Wirth, E. *Der Bazar von Isphahn*. Wiesbaden: 1978.

³¹ Ashraf, A. "Historical Obstacles to the Development of a Bourgeoisie in Iran," in M. A. Cook *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle-East*, London 1970.

³² Jackson, P. and Lockhart, L. eds. *The Timurid and Safavid Periods. The Cambridge History of Iran*, Volume 6. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. pp.526-27

found in many of them.³³ They all have much in common: they are brief and repetitiously offer the same information about the importance of the Armenians without adding much to the state of current knowledge.

4) *Secondary Works about the Armenian Merchants*

These have been briefly mentioned to in the introduction. As pointed out, the main centers for the study of Armenian merchants have been Erevan and Paris. Two scholars in Paris have written articles about the period.³⁴ However, most of the ground work has been done in Erevan. Apart from the invaluable account book of Hovhannes, and the article which is in fact a translation of the Armenian introduction to it, and a recent book on the Armenian merchants and their ties to Russia has been extremely helpful.³⁵ Without it, a study of New Julfa would have been difficult, as

³³Chaudhuri K. N. *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the rise of Islam to 1750*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
Chaudhuri, K. N. *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company 1660-1760*. Cambridge: 1978.
Foster, W. *The John Company*. London: 1926.
Glaman, Kristoff. *Dutch Asiatic Trade 1620-1740*. The Hague: 1958.
Kaepelin, P. *L'origine des Indes françaises: La Compagnie des Indes Orientales et François Martin*. Paris: 1908. Wilson, A. *The Persian Gulf* London 1928 and several other works listed in the bibliography.

³⁴Kevonian, K. "Marchands arméniens au 17ième siècle." *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, 16, (1975): 199-244.

Kévorkian, R. H. "L'imprimerie Surb Eǰmiacin et Surb Sargis Zoravar et le conflit entre Arméniens et Catholiques à Constantinople, (1695-1718). *Revue des études arméniennes*, 15 (n.s.) (1981): 401-437.

Kévorkian, R. H., "Livre missionnaire et enseignement catholique chez les Arméniens. 1583-1700." *Revue des études arméniennes*, 17 (1983): 588-599.

Kévorkian, R. H. "Diplomatic et mouvement de libération arménien de la guerre de Candie au siège de Vienne." *Moyen Orient et Ocean Indien*, 6 (1989): 1-44.

³⁵Xačikyan, Š. L. *Nor Julayi hay vajarakanut'yunə ev nra arevratntesakan kapəro rusastani het XVII ev XVIII darerum*. [The Merchants of New Julfa and their commercial ties with Russia in the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries.] Erevan: 1988.

the author had access to sources in Erevan which have been unavailable here, such as the published Armeno-Russian documents. The archives of New Julfa were extensively studied for its merchant families, their genealogies, and their social rank over a century ago by a local historian. Only recently has this work been translated to modern Armenian, and is now more accessible to researchers interested in the field.³⁶

This history has been constantly consulted here for the history of the merchant families of New Julfa. Apart from the archives in New Julfa proper, it remains the only source for the history of New Julfa. Without it this study would have been impossible. It has been used for factual information only, because the conclusions are often panegyrics of certain families.

In the United States, articles on New Julfa have been written by Vartan Gregorian³⁷ and by G. Bounoutian. There should be an upcoming dissertation about the Church in New Julfa by Vasgen Cukascian. As mentioned before there is a dissertation in preparation at Oxford which exploits the English archives³⁸.

In Canada, an article was published in the mid seventies on the role of the Armenians as intermediaries for the European Companies.³⁹ The title is misleading as it mainly discusses political developments in eighteenth century India and Armenian involvement there. The main thesis is the manipulation and "exploitations" of the Armenians by the East India Company. It concludes that the resentment and frustration created by their powerless and exploited position vis à vis the Companies led directly to the liberation movements that began in India. It is mainly concerned

³⁶Yovhannanc', H. *Patmutiwn Nor Julayi*. first edition, Julfa 1880, Translated into Ašxarabar by P.Petrossian, second edition Julfa 1980.

³⁷Gregorian, Vartan. "Minorities of Isphahan: The Armenian Community of Isphahan, 1587-1722." *Iranian Studies*, vol. VII, 2, (1974): 652-681.

³⁸Edmund Herzig at St. Anthony's college at Oxford

³⁹Hamalian Arpy. "The Armenians: Intermediaries for the European Companies." *University of Manitoba Anthropologie papers* no 14 Winnipeg 1976

with socio-political analysis, not trade. This is worth mentioning, because the focus of interest in the modern history of the Armenians has often been the formation of the liberation movements. The present study found no reason to delve into this social issue, though it is an important one. It is mostly an eighteenth century phenomenon.

This concludes the list of secondary works of any informational value. As is evident from the length of both lists, there are two problems: For Safavid trade a scarcity of primary sources, and an absence of secondary works based on indirect sources. The European merchant travellers of the seventeenth century, with their keen eye for trade, as well as the Armenian sources such as the account book of Hovhannes and the manual for merchants by Lucas of Vanand, may contribute somewhat to filling this gap.

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- Abraham Erewanci. *Patmut'iwn paterazmac'n 1721-1736. [History of the Wars 1721-1736.]* Čemčemean, S. ed. Venice: San Lazaro, 1977.
- Arak'el Davrizheci Vardapet. *Girk' patmut'eanc' šaradreal Vardapetin Arak'eloy Davrēzhac'woy: gawarin Araratoy ev masin Golt'an en minčew yawart patmagrut'eans aylev i hišum asteal masnavorabar asti ev anti. [A Book of Histories composed by Arak'el of Tabriz] Hams Elawdamum 1669.* Amsterdam: 1669. Vałaršapat: 1896.
- Arak'el Davrižec'i *Girk' patmut'eanc' [book of Histories] Erevan 1990*
- Eskandar Beg Monshi. *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*. Trans. Roger M. Savory. Persian Heritage Series, 28. Boulder, Colorado: 1978
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- Xačikyan, L. S. Pařazyan, H. *Hovhannes Ter-Davt'yan Ĵulayec'u Hašvetumara. [The Account Book of Hovannes Ter- Davt'yan of Julfa.] Erevan: 1984.*
- La Croix, Pétis de. *La Turquie chrétienne, sous la puissante protection de Louis le Grand, protecteur unique du cristianisme en Orient. Contenant l'état present des nations et des églises grecque, arménienne, maronite dans l'empire Otoman*. Paris: Pierre Herissant, 1695.
- Łucas Vanadec'i. *Ganj č'apoy, kšroy, t'woy, ew dramıc' bolor asxarhi. Or ē gitut'win amenayn tesak č'apoc', kšroc', ew dramıc' orov bolor ašxarhi vačarakanut'iwn vari. žolovyal ew i mi vwayr havak'eal ašxatut'eamb Łukasu abašnorh jankali Vnandec'woy. Caxiwk ew i xndroy hayc'man hatc'man Ĵulayec'i Xač'aturi ordi Paron Petrosin. Tpiwk ew hawanut'eamberamec' vehi Tomay vardapeti ew srbap'ayl episcoposi Vanandec'woy Tann Golt'neanc'Ami tearn. 1699, yunvari 16. y Amsterdam. [A Treasury of measures, weights, numbers, and moneys of the whole world. Or knowledge of all sorts of weights, measures and moneys that rule the commerce of the whole world. Assembled and collected within the same work by the work of Lucas of Vanand. At the expense and request of Peter son of Khatchadour of Julfa published under the direction of the sublime doctor bishop Thomas of Vanand of the house of Golt'n in Amsterdam in the year 1699 on January 16].*

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- Minorsky, V. *Tadhkirat al-Muluk, a Manual of Safavid Administration*. Gibb Memorial Series, volume XVI, London 1943.
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- Seth, Mesrovb Jacob. *Armenians in India*. First published in 1937. Calcutta: Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth, 1983.
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France en Perse: fr. 7121, fr. n. a. 7259

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Perse en France fr. 20980

2) Arméniens, Marchands, fr. 18592, fr. 18593

3) Avedic Vartapet, fr. n.a. 7487, fr. n.a. 7490

4) Commerce, Perse fr.16909, fr. n.a. 5385

5) Marcar Avanchins, fr.8972, fr. 15529

6) Lettre de Marcara à Colbert, fr. 8971

7) Correspondance de François Martin, fr.n.a. 9352

8) Compagnie des Indes Orientale:

Recueils: fr. 8971-8972, fr. 13057, fr. 15527, fr. 15528, fr. 15529, fr. 16736,
fr. 16737, fr. 16738.

(1664-1723) fr. 8973

(1664-1738) fr. 21778

(1668-1675) fr. 6553

(1719-1731) fr. 21779

(1743-1746) fr. 14831

(1754-1755) fr. 8993

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fr. 9555

fr. 16738

fr. 21663

fr. n. a. 1647

fr. n. a. 9801

- 9) Mélanges Colbert, fr.23863
 76-77 Inventaire de J.B.Colbert
 101 à 176 bis Correspondance de J. B. Colbert, lettres adressées à lui 1649-1677.
- 10) Traités de commerce, XVIIe siècle, fr. 646
 271-291, Méditerranée
 337-342, l'Arabie et la Perse
- 11) Recueil de la marine et des colonies 1649-1769 , fr.fr.5581
- 12) Relation de la Perse par l'Abbé Gaudreau, fr. 5623
- 13) Relation de la Perse faite par Raphaël du Mans, fr. 5632
- 14) Trajet de Mr. Carré en Orient (1669-1672), fr. 6090
- 15) Petis de Lacroix, fr. 6094, fr. 6095, fr.6098, fr.6101, fr.6102, fr. 6122, fr.6123, fr. 14679
- 16) Papiers de l'Abbé Raynal sur le négoce dressés en 1682, fr. 6431

Fond Arménien: Catalogue établi par F. Macler:

- 1) Dictionnaire des Commerçans François et Latin, manus. 263
- 2) Dictionarius Armeno-Latinum, manus.264
- 3) Dictionnaire Français-Arménien vulgaire, manus.262
- 4) Mélanges, emprisonnement d'Awetik, manus.196

Archives de la Marine

- The following archives concerning Armenian merchants were indicated to me by H. Kévonian, conservator at the Manuscrits Orientaux at the B.N.

Marine B7 205:

folio 41 Mémoire à Colbert sur le commerce du Levant 15 novembre 1669.
 folio 63 Voyage de Perse et des Indes par La Boullaye le Gouz
 folio 137 Ordonnance du 25 Septembre 1674, Alep

Marine B'I:

folios 98-100 Ambassade de Perse à Copenhague
 folios.309-317 Le Sieur Agobjean Consul de Perse à Marseille

Marine B'3 1716:

folios 26, 138,191, Commerce en Perse
 folio 85 Ambassadeur de Perse emprisonné à Constantinople
 folio 399 Agopjean, Consul de Perse

Marine B7 61:

folio 1 v Le 1e janvier 1688 arrivée de 400 balles de soie pour le compte d'un Arménien
 folios 12-19 Visite des soies
 folios 33 Arrivée d'autres soies
 folio 33 v Arrêt du conseil pour autoriser les Arméniens à vendre

Marine B7 56 1683:

folio 58 L'ordonnance sur la liberté du commerce
 folio 253 Arrêt du conseil sur le mode de taxation des soies

Marine B7 80 1710:

folio 35 Passeport pour le nommé Gaspard, marchand Arménien

Archives Nationales:**Archives des Colonies:**

- 1) Compagnie des Indes, officiers civiles, C2 62-69
- 2) Droits d'entrée et de sorties, série G 7
- 3) Commerce des Textiles, série G 80

4) Marcara Avanchins, C5A1 Madagascar, C262 Extrême Orient

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TRAVEL ACCOUNTS ¹

- Bruyn, Cornelis de. *Reizen van Cornelis de Bruyn, door de vermaardste Deelen van Klein Asia, de Eylanden Scio, Rhodus, Cyprus, Metelino, Stanchio, &c. Mitsgaders de voornaamste Steden van Aegypten, Syrien en Palestina, Verrijkt met meer als 200. kopere Konstplaatē, vertoonende de beroemdste Landschappen, Steden, &c. Alles door den Auteur selfs na het leven afgetekend.* Deilft: Gedrukt by Henrik van Krooneveld, 1698.
- Bruyn, Cornelis de. *Voyage qu Levant, c'est à dire dans les Principaux endroits de l'Asie Mineure dans les Isles de Chio, de Rhodes, de Chypre &c. De même que dans les plus Considerables Villes d'Egypte, de Syrie, et de la Terre Sainte; Enrichi de plus de Deux Cens Tailles-douces où sont représentées les plus célèbres villes, Païs, Bourgs, & autres choses dignes de remarque, le tout dessine d'après nature: par Corneille Le Brun.* Traduit du Flamand. Delft: chez Henri de Kroonevelt, 1700.
- Bruyn, Cornelis de. *A Voyage to the Levant: or, Travels in the Principal Parts of Asia Minor, the Islands of Scio, Rhodes, Cyprus, &c. With an Account of the most Considerable Cities of Egypt, Syria and the Holy Land. Enrich'd with above Two Hundred Copper-Plates, wherein are represented the most Noted Cities, Countries, Towns, and other remarkable Things, all Drawn to the Life.* W. J., trans. London: Printed for Jacob Tonson and Thomas Bennet, 1702.
- Bruyn, Cornelis de. *Reizen over Moskovie, door Persie en Indie: Verrykt met Dreihonder Kunstplaten, vertoonende Deberoemste lantschappen en Steden, ook de byzondere dragten, beesten, gewassen en planten, die daar gevonden worden: Voor al Derzelver oudheden, en wel voornamentlyk heel uitvoerig, die van het Heerlyke en van oudts de geheele wervelt door befaemde Hof van Persepolis, by ien Persianen Tchilminar genaemt. Alles door den Auteur zelf met groote naeukeurigheit na't leven afgetekent, en nooit voor dezen in't ligt gebragt.* Amsterdam: By Rudolph en Gerard Wetstein, Joannes Oosterwyk, Hendrik van de Gaete. Boekverkopers, 1714.
- Bruyn, Cornelis de. *Voyages de Corneille le Brun par la Moscovie, en Perse, et aux Indes Orientales. Ourvage enrichi de plus de 320 tailles douces des Plus curieuses, representant les Plus belles vues de ces Païs; leurs principales Villes; les differens habillemens des Peuples, qui habitent ces Regions éloignées; les Animaux, les Oiseaux, les Poissons & les Plantes extraordinaires, qui s'y trouvent. Avec les Antiquitez de ces Païs, &*

¹ We thank Jack Vartoogian for his work on the Travellers in Armenia . His bibliography provided many of the editions included here.His dissertation was finished in 1974, this bibliography is updated to 1992.

particulièrement celles du Fameux Palais de Persepolis. Que les Perses appellent Chelminar. Le tout dessiné d'après Nature sur les Lieux. On y a ajoûté la route qu'a suivie Mr Isbrants, Ambassadeur de Moscovie, en traversant la Russie & la Tartarie, Pour se rendre à la Chine. Et quelques Remarques contre Mrs. Chardin & Kempfer. Avec une Lettre écrite à l'Auteur, sur ce sujet. 2 vols. Amsterdam: chez les Freres Wetstein, 1718.

Bruyn, Cornelis de. *Travels into Muscovy, Persia, and Part of the East-Indies Containing An Accurate Description of whatever is most remarkable in those Countries. And Embellished with above 320 Copper Plates, representing the finest Prospects, and most considerable Cities in those Parts; the different Habits of the People, the singular and extraordinary Birds, Fishes, and Plants which are there to be found: As likewise the Antiquities of those Countries, and particularly the noble Ruins of the famous Palace of Persepolis, called Chelminar by the Persians. The whole being delineated on the Spot, from the respective objects. To which is added, An Account of the Journey of Mr. Isbrant's, Ambassador from Muscovy, through Russia and Tartary to China; together with Remarks on the Travels of Sir John Chardin, and Mr. Kempfer, and a letter written to the Author on that Subject. In Two Volumes. By M. Cornelius Le Bruyn. Translated from the Original French.* London: Printed for A. Bettesworth and C. Hitch, S. Birt, C. Davis, J. Clarke, S. Harding, D. Browne, A. Millar, J. Schuckburgh, and T. Osborne, 1737.

Bruyn, Cornelis de. *A New and More Correct Translation Then has hithero appeared in Public, of Mr. Cornelius Le Brun's Travels Into Muscovy, Persia, and Divers Parts of the East Indies; containing An Accurate Description of all such Articles as are most remarkable in each of these different countries, and most worthy the Attention of the Curious Reader. As Also of their Antiquities; but more particularly those relating to the famous Palace of Persepolis, commonly called Chelimar by the Persans: By a Gentleman of Oxford, Adorned with a large number of Copper Plates.* London: Printed for J. Warcus, at the Bible, the corner of Rackett-Court, in Fleet-Street, 1759

Chardin, Jean. *Le Couronnement de Soleimaan Troisième Roi de Perse, et ce qui s'est passé de plus mémorable dans les deux premières années de son Règne.* Paris: Claude Barbin, 1671.

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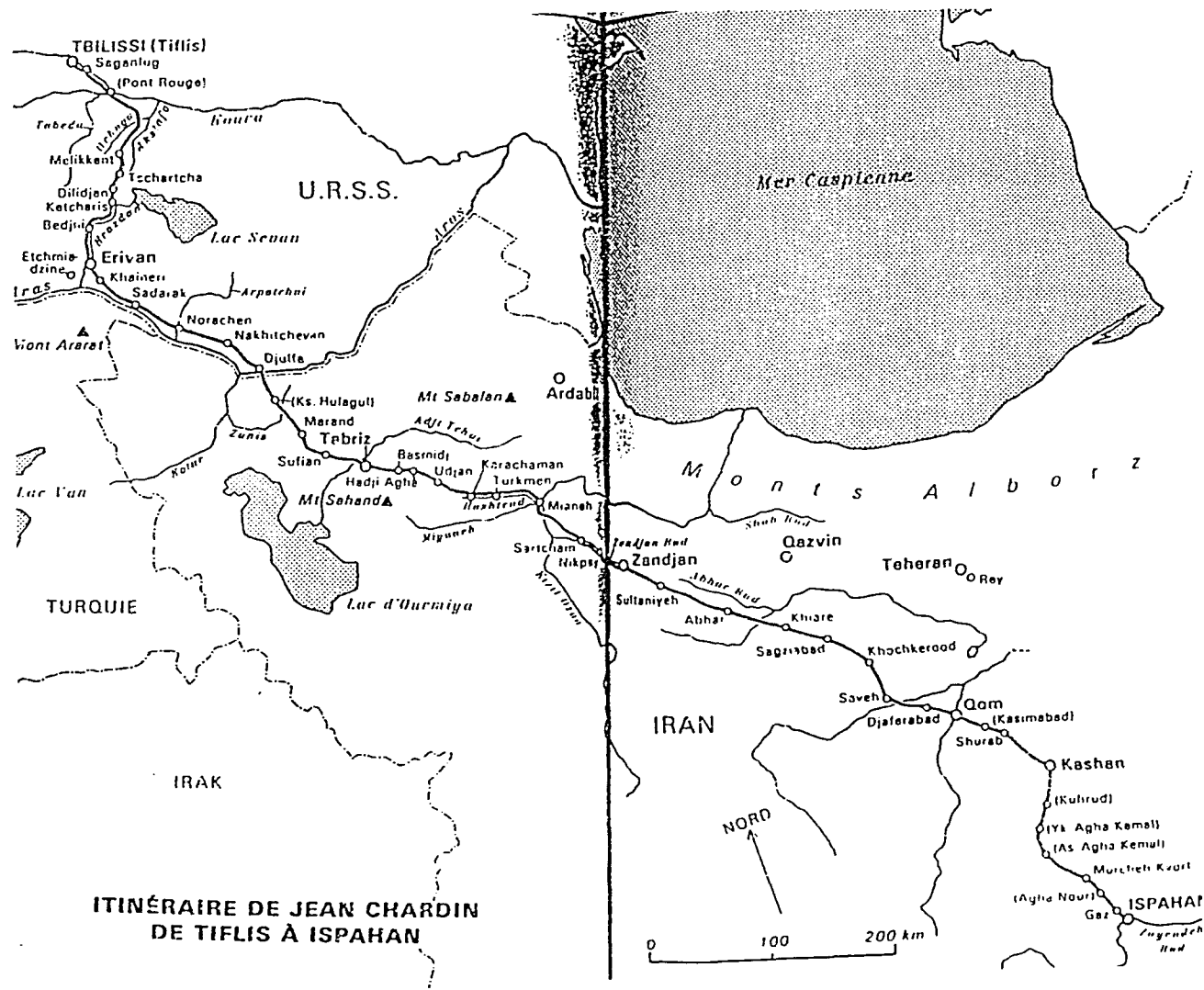
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APPENDIX B

၃) စိုက်ပျိုးမှု ချုပ်ကွပ်ရေး ကော်မတီ (သို့မဟုတ် အခြား အဖွဲ့အစည်း) ကို ချုပ်ကွပ်မှု အောက်တွင် ထည့်သွင်းရန်၊

Բ. Նրա Յանը քրիստենա-թիւնը ուղարկած, իսկ
Կոստան Ծառ Սուլէյման թաղապետի առաջ և յայտնել քե-
նեկեղցիները առնել հոյս ունեւորեալ և անկալ պահա-
րարները՝ և գրպան ծրարն ինքնամեղ անշղիկ կարելի
Այլ քիչ քաղաքացիներն ինչ աստուած թաղապետ Լաբէ
Լաստառեղ թուրք եկեղցիներէ վրայ՝ մի կողմադատել զ-
բնիկով գրաւ կամարէ տէր թաղապետութիւնը այսինքն.

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Զեյնեդին Գալստյանը հայտնի էր իր անհատական և հասարակական գործունեությամբ։ Դեռ 1920-ական թվականներին նա ակտիվ մասնակցություն էր ունենում հայ ազգային-ազատագրական շարժմանը։ 1925 թվականին նա մեկնում է Երևան, որտեղ հանդիպում է Գրիգոր Բաղդասարյանին, որի հետ համատեղ աշխատում էր «Հայաստանի հայրենասիրական ընկերության» և «Հայաստանի հայրենասիրական ընկերության» կազմակերպման գործերին։ 1926 թվականին նա մեկնում է Երևան, որտեղ հանդիպում է Գրիգոր Բաղդասարյանին, որի հետ համատեղ աշխատում էր «Հայաստանի հայրենասիրական ընկերության» և «Հայաստանի հայրենասիրական ընկերության» կազմակերպման գործերին։

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ԲԱՅՈՋՅԱՆՆԵՐԻ ԿՐԹԱՏԵՐԻՔԻԱԿ ԶԵՐԳՈՅ ՄՏՆԻՆԷ
Ա. Հայտը 1120 (1871) Բնակարանի Լուսարարներին գրված է:

第 3 章

ቴዎድሮስ ማርያም ቤተ ክርስቲያን

ամեն տարւոյ համար) նախ եկեղեցիներէց, որոնք գտնուած են Սպականում և նրա սահմաններում պատկանցին, ըստ նշանակած քանակութեան, որոնք ի ներքոյ գրւեցին իւրաքանչիւր եկեղեցու անունով և այդ գումարը յանձնեն կրտսերութեան գանձարանին, անդորրագրի ուսանալով նրանից, Կոստայարական գիւղանապոյրներ յիշեալ գումարը քաւանդեց. քանանանքի և վարդապետների վրայ, ըստ նշանակած կանոնին, որը եթէ չկատարուի ստիպւածով պատուհի, Գրեց Սաքաթ ամսին, 1085 (1071) Քւին:

Սպական, հին Ջուղայի եկեղեցիներ

Ամենապիկի վանք	50 Քուման
Մէլլանի սկեպցի 1	20 >
Մուրապէնց 2	25 >
Խոջայ Լաւորէի 3 Մէլլան Քաղի	6 >
Խոջայ Լաւորէի 4	15 >
Խոջայ Նապարէնց 5	12 >
Խոջայ Կարապետի 6	14 >
Խոջայ Միկրան 7	8 >
Խոջայ Շահվէլէնց 8	20 >
Խոջայ Ղարիբ 9	20 >
Խոջայ Ղարապէնց 10	30 >
Սաւր Թովաննէս 11	10 >
Օւանայ վանք	5 >
Կոստանայ վանք	30 >
	265 >

Նոր Ջուղայի եկեղեցիներ

Թովորջան 12	15 Քուման
Աւետ Սամբուգ 13	12 >
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կին թաղապետների օրերում, անվանել է, որովհետև նոր Զուգայի եկեղեցիների և Ապահանի միւս գաւառների հարկեր իւրնիլ տարւոյ համար ազատութիւն չնորոցիք, որ որանից յետոյ ըստ վեհապառ Շահաբբաի սահմանադրեալ կադրի խաղաղութեամբ ծնան և աղբթն Տէրութեան զտէր յաւիտեան հաստատութեան համար:

Մեծագոյն զիւանի գիւնապետներ, այս հրովարտաւի երամանը հաստատուն համարէք և օրինակէք Տէրութեան տոմարում և որանից յետոյ հրովարտակ կրին չըպահանջէի զրա համար: Գրեց ընթիւլ տաւալ սկզբին 1125 (1709) թւին»:

Գ.

Հնամուսնեանը հաշուած հրաման, թէ որովհետև առաջին տարիներում էին և նոր Զուգայի եկեղեցիների, ինչպէս նաև Փնրիոյ սահմանակից գաւառների բարւարի, Գեանդիւմնի և Ապահանի միւս գաւառների հարկի համար: Դիւանական տոմարում որևէ հարկ հաստատում գործիւն չունի: Եւսին, սակայն մի միջոց առաջ թշնամիների զրկարժութեամբ և մանաւանդ նորահաւատ Շէյխմովնի անունով հարկ սահմանեց իւրաքանչիւր եկեղեցու համար և նրանից յետոյ վարդապետների ֆահանսների և ժողովրդականների միջնաների կողմից խնդրել էին թէ միեւալ խնդիրը նոր է յարժարեցրում, եւտեաբաբ ըստ նրանց թախանանքների աբգաբական քարնշտութեան շնորհիւ ներքինը նրանց այդ հարկի գումարը սակայն հրկրորդ անգամ և կրկին տնտեսութեամբ 1127 թւի Զուգայի, յիշեալ գումարը հասաւ տէրութեան գաւառարանը և նրա հաստացումը եղաւ գաւապետին: Սակայն այս մամանալում կրկին քնաւումը Զաքարիան, վարդապետը, թողապետները և Զուգայի հայ ֆահանսները՝ աղայեցի և խնդրեցին, որ միեւալ հարկի գումարը լրացուի նրանց:

Դրա համար արքայական շնորհածութեամբ միեւալ ժողովականների ներքինը եկեղեցիների համար նշանակւած գումարը և թագաւորի գլխաւորութեան շնորհիւ երամանցին, որ յետ ախաւ առջ մափն պահանջ չկին յրանելը, հարձրապատիւ գանձապետներ, միեւալ հարկի գումարը դուրս հանէք ձեր հաշիւների միջոց և այդ մասին մի պահանջէք: Մեծ և բարձրագոյն կառավարութեան զիւանի գլխիներ, որա միջի գրեւորները հաստատուն համարէք և միեւալ հարկի գումարը ձեր տաւարներէք դուրս հանէք: որ նոր կարգ չկին: Այս հրամանի հակառակ ոչինչ մի կատարէք և այս աղբթիւր ճանաչէք և նշանադրութեան աղբթի համարէք: Գրեց Զիջաթուլ հաբաւ ամսի 1128 (1712) թւին»:

Վերև քերած չգրա հրովարտանքները արեւած են Շահ Սուլթան Լեւոնի կողմից, սակայն նրանք մինչև այնպէս են ներգործութիւն ունեցել որքան կաշառքը և նւերները հայ խնդրարկներէք երևացել են նորին վեհապառութեան և նրա նախարարների առջև, իսկ կաշառները և նւերները ստանալուց յետոյ, կրկին նորագում էր հրամանը ստանալու եկեղեցիների հարկերը:

Գ. Զուգայի ժողովուրդները այլևս չկարողանալով միանալից վճարել ձանդ հարկը, իրենց տագնաքները կեղեցեաները և եկեղեցիների հարկը պարտաւորեցին 1720 տարւոյ համար էին Զուգայի եկեղեցիների աբգաբական համարում անիքում հարկի վճարման փոխարէն: Այդ տարւոյ եկեղեցիների արեւած աղբթեայ սպասներից ցուցան է ստորև նշանակւածները (որը աշխատաբար գրեւել էր իւրաքանչիւր եկեղեցիների ֆահանսներ կողմից և կնքւած հաստատութեան համար, ըստ առաջարկութեան Աստածատուր և Յակոբ վարդապետների):

Ստուգար Գեորգ եկեղեցու սպաստարներ Տէր Յարութիւն և Տէր Յովհաննէս եկեղեցու լիւր և մի չտէք արձգ:

րաճախում, որ սրանից յետոյ այս մասին տխրյ չպահանջեն նրանցից: Մեն տէրութեան դիւանադպիրներ վերադրանքները հաստատուն իմացնէր, և ասացած զաւարդ զիւսնական տոմարից զուր հանէր, որպէսզի այդ նորից չկանանաւորելով հաստատուի: Այս մասին հրամանիցս գտնատալին չլինի, և ամեն տարւոյ համար նոր հրովորտակ մի պահանջէր, եւս պարտաւոր լինի կատարել համայն այս խաղերի: Գրեց 1157 (1721) թւին Ոստապան ամսին:

Նոր Զուգայի ներքոյից վեց եկեղեցիներ քահանայները գրում են չնդկատաւում եղող Խոջայ Մալխան զարտեան Երևանցի անունով մէկի ուղարկելու համար եղած ծախսը վերագրելով հրովարտակի ստացումի համար: Այդ նախ խնդրագրի խոսքերը այդ անշուքեամբ յիշատակութեան արժանի լինելով նշանակում են ստորև.

«Քրիստոսի նւաստ ծառաներու Երևանի Սուրբ Ամենափրկիչ մեն եկեղեցու հատարակ քահանաներու սուրբ Յակոբ եկեղեցու՝ որ մականունով կոչում են Բաղարթայ հատարակ քահանաներու սուրբ Միքայիլ անուն եկեղեցու, որ ասում են Մէյ-դանի, հատարակ քահանաներու սուրբ Աստածածին եկեղեցու, որ գաղկեցիներին է, սուրբ Հուսաւորի եկեղեցու պարզ քահանաներ, որ Դուրեմ թաղեցիներին ենք և սուրբ Աւետիք եկեղեցու հատարակ քահանաներ, որ Գուսաւորտալ գում ենք: Երեսն արհաւիրում և տիրոյ արջունը հաննի քաւրաշտուն և որդրած Խոջայ Մալխանից Աստուած քեզ և մեր ժողովրդին օրհնի, տխրեան գրում ենք ծախելու սուրբ եկեղեցիների հարկ տալը ներելու հրամանագրի համար, որ չափ չունի, որ չենք կարող յինչ նաև հրաւիրական կանոնի անունը: Երբ վերջին թշուառութեան մէջ Խոջայի որդրած Աստուածը իր մեն որդրում լինելով որդրածց մեզ՝ որ հեւեհց յորդորեց քեզ այդ թուրք զրեւում մեզ, որում գրել էիր մեզ թէ երբ գուց սուրբ եկե-

ղեցիների հարկը նւիրելու հրովարտակը հանէք և հաստատուն օրինակը ինչ ուղարկէք եւ մէկ հազար թուական ուղարկութիւն տամ որ հաննի ձեզ: Երբ ար այս յատարարական համակը հասում, քրիստ էլ նոր հոգի ստացանք և նորից ստիճ կանդնցինք և ուրիշ մի նոր քաղաք կառուցինք և դրամ ծախեցինք: Ինչ որ յսել եւ թէ քրեան կախած զանազանցինք և նախատեսցինք, որը մի առ մի չի կարելի գրել առնել մինչև որ Աստած մեր զորքով, զաւարդ ուրտը գաւթ ձգեց, որ այս գիրքը մեզ շնորհեց, որով մենած էինք և կենդանացանք, որովհետեւ երէ չնւրաւր Աստած ու արած, այժմ մեր եկեղեցիները և քահանայութիւնը վերացած կ'լինէր, որովհետև 400 թուական ծախս եղաւ, այժմ գտնում ենք Աստուածաց, որ անան չարեց մեզ իր ծառաներին այժմ քրիստոսի շնորհիւ ազատ ենք հարկապահութիւնից: Գրեց 1120 թուական պարտք է Խոջայի եկեղեցիներին վրայ, որին ասեն ամիս 1150 դիւան տակաւ ենք վճարում, որովհետև Նոյիկից ենք վերցրել և մեր սուրբ եկեղեցիների արքայութեան սպանները և անթերերը ամբողջ անաստուած կապալտնելի մօտ գրում մէջ է, և մեր քոյրը սուրբ եկեղեցիները անգաղղի, մեր և կողպատած է Խոջայի և մենք այլու երես չունենք մեր ժողովրդի մօտ, որ դրամ ասանանք, ենտաքար մեն յայտով այս խնդրեցինք Աստուածաց քո օրով և խորհրդով և մեր Առաջնորդ Մովսէս աստածաբան վարդապետի գիտութեամբ »:

Զ. Շահ Ալիբադից հրովարտակը ստանալուց յետոյ, թուական է թէ վերջ գտաւ եկեղեցիների հարկի վճարումը: Երբվնուն դրանից յետոյ յիշատակութիւն այլու չի լինում եկեղեցական հարկերի մասին: Ըստ իմ խորհրդութեան, եկեղեցիների հարկի խափանումի պատճառը եղաւ Գարեթ թագաւորութեան շիթթան վիճակը Աղաններին Գարեթ տան մասեք գործելուց յետոյ և Նուրի Ծախի գործանքը և

